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INSTITUTE FOR WORLD ECONOMICS
(FORMER CENTER FOR AFRO-ASIAN RESEARCH)
OF THE HUNGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

ZOLTÁN GYENGE
Ethiopia on the Road of Non-Capitalist Development

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BUDAPEST
1976

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STUDIES ON DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Publication series of the
Institute for World Economics
(former Center for Afro-Asian Research)
of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences

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History

Ethiopia is an ancient country with a history reaching back into the remote past. Historians mentioned the Axum Empire as early as three thousand years ago. The legend of the Queen of Sheba, of her encounter with Solomon, King of Judaea appears in pretentious historical treatises and mythic texts as well as in highly dubious Ethiopian documents.¹

Some millenia ago, peoples resulting from the interbreeding of the aborigines of this Eastern African area with Arab immigrants built a state about the town of Axum: it was known as the Empire of Axum for two thousand years. It is this empire that can be regarded as the ancestor and precursor of modern Ethiopia. The Axum Empire attained the zenith of its power about the middle of the first millennium of our era. As to its social structure, it was a slave-holding kingdom, carrying on a thriving trade with what was then known of the world, maintaining close contacts with the Egyptian and Greek cultures and others.

Christianity was spread by priests from Syria in its monophysite² form, in dependence from the Coptic Church of Alexandria. This is how the Coptic church came to be dominant in Ethiopia. It was in the fifth century that the country became a more or less Christian state. In its further history, it was known as Christian Ethiopia.

Arab expansion, the propagation of the Islamic faith became one of the factors in the decline of the Axum Empire. From the sixth century on, Arab tribes, driven by the idea of building a Great Arabic Empire, broke the power of the great kingdom in Eastern Africa: the country fell apart into a number of minute kingdoms. Axum survived as the centre of the kingdom for some more centuries, but its significance was much curtailed. In the ninth century, the capital was destroyed by heathen tribes, and the world had no further news of the Ethiopian state until the eleventh century, when, close to a "small town" in Northern Ethiopia, King Lalibella caused Christian churches to be built in enormous caves cut into some hills. This centre of worship is a historical site named after the king today, an important tourist attraction. After centuries of "darkness", the power of the Solomonic branch of rulers was restored in the thirteenth century. It is from this date that the history of feudal Ethiopia is reckoned.

The history of the feudal kingdom is the story of embattled petty monarchs vying for the throne and for power. It is typical of the state of affairs that the country for 500 years lacked a capital, a focal point whence the unification of its straggling provinces could have been achieved. The capital was wherever the king was installed. The temporarily accepted king had a relationship of lord to vassal with the local aristocracy and local rulers. They developed between them a broad range of feudal hierarchy, in which everybody from the small local landlords to the military-feudal nobility in the retinue of the king lived off the work and sweat of a miserable peasantry. A military-feudal order of relationships came to be established. The writ of the King ran in the northern and middle parts of today's Ethiopia.

In the meanwhile, the country suffered incursions and pillage from the north and south and even from the west. From the south, nomadic tribes of the Galla invaded and occupied the middle of today's Ethiopia.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, the country was attacked from the southeast by Islamic groups, from the territory of present-day Somalia, under the leadership of one Ahmad Ibn al-Ghazi,³ called Gran or the left-handed, who laid waste most of the country.

The Arabic-Turk Islamic groups declared a "holy war" on Christian Ethiopia. During the wars, a substantial part of the Ethiopian culture as developed up to that time came to be destroyed. The rulers of that period asked Portugal, then an important marine power, for help. The troops of Gran were defeated in 1541 by troops commanded by Christofer da Gama, younger brother of the noted discoverer and traveller Vasco da Gama.⁴

This was the date when the colonizing intervention of Portugal in the East African region had its beginning. The Portuguese troops were followed by Jesuits, the members of the Society of Jesus founded in 1534, who, using mellifluous words and all means of spiritual coercion, strove to convert the Coptic Christian Ethiopians to the Roman Catholic faith. The "missionary activity" of the Jesuits brought another 100 years of religious intolerance to Ethiopia.

In the midst of the struggle for power and of the contest between religions, a successful bid for reinforcing the central power could be made in the mid-seventeenth century. King Fasilides (1632-1667) designated the town of Gondar⁵ as the capital of the country. This is the period when nomadic feudalism gradually passed into settled feudalism having a preference for agriculture, and into a monarchy. The kingdom with Gondar for its seat succeeded in reinforcing the central power. Its campaign against provincialism bore some temporary results. In the capital and around it, it was able to further the contemporary techniques of agriculture, of producing manufactures and weaponry, and also to raise the level of culture; the rulers caused a fortified castle-court to be built and organized a royal seat. The rulers of Gondar developed wide-ranging connexions with European courts and Arab rulers. The buildings they caused to erect reflect Arabic and European influences. Their remains are among the noble traditions of Ethiopia up to this day.

In the modern history of Ethiopia, the struggle for the unification of the country made good use of the Gondar experience. Although the Gondar period was followed over a full century by strife among rivalizing princes, in the second part of the 19th century the present Ethiopia came into existence as a creation of Emperor Menelik⁶ II (1889-1913), a son of the family of noblemen lording it over Shoa, the central province of Ethiopia.

Menelik's bid for power and for the unification of the country took place under altogether different historical conditions than those of his earlier predecessors. By his time, the European colonizing powers had appeared on the scene. The Suez Canal was opened in 1869. Egypt was occupied by England in 1882. England as a colonizing power held sway over a large part of Eastern Africa, the Arab regions and India. One of Menelik's predecessors, Tewodros, who entered into a conflict with the English, was militarily defeated and driven to suicide by a punitive expedition.

On the Eastern shores of Ethiopia, the Italians appear, aided and abetted by the English. They occupy the seaports of Assab (1879) and Massawa (1885), and gain a foothold in the province of Eritrea. In the west and southeast, the drive by Menelik and his predecessors to unify the country likewise came up against colonizing action, but Menelik himself succeeded in pushing the frontiers of Ethiopia far to the south, conquering the heathen kingdoms to the south of the Amharic regions.

Menelik's state-building activity, then, was threefold. He subdued sedition, the provincialism of the country aristocracy, conquered the southern regions, and maneuvered skilfully face to face with the imperialist invaders. In the battle of Aduwa he defeated the Italian troops but left Eritrea in their hands; he requested the aid of the French and Belgians for

the modernizing of the country; he pursued a wide-ranging diplomatic activity with the great powers of his age. Under his rule, the country developed into a mighty feudal empire, whose Amharic Christian population came to be a minority as compared with other, conquered tribes.

Class and property relationships

Evolved over long centuries in feudal Ethiopia, these relationships are inextricably interwoven with factors of ethnic-tribal, linguistic and religious nature which further complicate the picture. Early in the twentieth century, in the empire expanded by conquests, a feudal social structure was mixed with traditional tribal elements. Despite all attempts at modernization, this society remained in existence until the mid-twentieth century and even beyond, almost without change. Basic social classes included the peasantry; the ruling nobility that retained some formal elements of military rule from earlier centuries; the Church and clergy, encompassing and permeating the entire society, was itself a ruling institution or "social" order.

The dominant idea of this society was the almighty power of the imperial rule, of divine and ancient origin, as confirmed by a religious ideology; the affirmation of the existence of a feudal structure from time immemorial, and of its continuation forever and ever; the assertion that it was meet and "lawful" to exploit the labour of serfs. The existing division of labour, in which the peasant produced, and the gentilefolk ruled, governed and soldiered, was a form of exploitation shored up with concepts of traditionalism, with the aim of maintaining it in all eternity.

Peasantry; land property of the peasants

The peasantry is an ancient group within the population of the country. In the north, it is engaged principally in farming and animal husbandry. The population in the north is largely of Amharic and Tigre nationality, whereas in the centre and in the south there are numerous Gallas and other tribesmen, nomadic cattle breeders in their majority.

The peasant has a right to possess the land tilled by him; this right is likewise of ancient origin. His title to the land derives from the fact of his occupying it and from the original act of bringing it under cultivation. On the strength of the practice of dividing and re-allotting land in ancient pre-feudal communities, families that had offspring could possess, use and bequeath the land.

Such land inherited along a family line is called rist land in Ethiopian tradition and hence also in literature. The owner of rist land is called ristegna.⁷ Most of the peasantry owned such land in ancient times. Inheritance resulted in the comminution of rist holdings, so that in the mid-twentieth century half the peasantry owned less than half a hectare of land per family in the northern part of the country. In the northern provinces of the country, there remained in existence that form of ownership where land was owned by rural communities and families merely had the right to use it. No reallocation took place except when a family's line of inheritance got broken, or when a family moved out of the community, since land was practically no object of commerce in this region. This has become a somewhat

problematic issue today, as the land reform in preparation intends to change the structure of land ownership.

With the evolution of feudalism, the "landed gentry" and the members of the military hierarchy became owners or usufructuaries of the peasants' land. "Free" peasantry was subdued into serfdom. Landlords, members of the royal family, the Church, or officers of this or that rank in the feudal army were given the inheritable or temporary right of collecting land rent over a given area. Against this rent, the member of the feudal class managed and administered the affairs of the area in question. Early on in Ethiopian feudalism, this meant largely a military administration, but subsequently it gradually passed into the "civil", provincial-feudal, administration of a province, a region or a district, into the political and economic oppression of the peasantry.⁸

Ethiopian peasantry paid feudal serfs' dues even as late as the nineteen-sixties. Even the various tax reforms introduced by Emperor Haile Selassie meant in fact that most of the taxes were paid by the peasantry, and the landlord merely passed on part of them to the tax collectors. The tithe due to the clergy also remained in force up till the second third of this century. In this respect the conditions of serfage were entirely similar to those in Europe. The evolution of a so called freeholding (yeoman) layer was a result of special conditions in Ethiopian history. Part of the peasantry, having participated in the armed struggle for feudal power, obtained land as a reward or the right of paying no dues to the local landlord or governor, or of being absolved from paying such dues after a period of time. Similar rights were awarded to settlers, especially in the southern regions, or to squatters on "virgin" land. Since such land covered large areas in Ethiopia, the situation was a fairly frequent one, but later on these areas, too, were bestraddled by governors, administrators of the Imperial house.⁹

The fates of the peasantry depended on two factors. Its land holdings were gradually comminuted, and the increasing shophistication of the administration augmented the number of those living off serfs' dues, which in turn increased the size of those dues. Exploitation of the peasantry became even more oppressive in those times when as a result of strife for land possession and for power lands changed hands rather often.

On paper, feudal conditions have been changed in Ethiopia. In the nineteen-fifties and -sixties, imperial decrees concerned with land taxes established everyone's titles to the land after which they had to pay tax. Feudal titles to land or the de facto possession of a plot became bases of "private land property", and the serfs found themselves left high and dry on the land of a proprietor in the modern sense, whose tenants they then became. This relationship was not new, as even in the age of feudal land ownership imperial decrees repeatedly caused changes in the relation of landlord and peasants, and the peasantry existed in a sort of patriarchal-"familiar" relation to the landlord to whom it paid its dues. The only authority the peasantry knew was the local tax-collecting landowner, and hence its relationship to him and his family, as the representatives of power was simply that the landowner had to be paid tax, rent or dues since time immemorial anyway.

Most of the "liberated" peasantry was turned into landless tenantry. Statistical surveys in the late nineteen-sixties registered the majority of arable land as leased land in many a province of Ethiopia (e.g. Illubabor 73%, Kaffa 59%¹⁰). This means that under the landlords' holding rights the land remained in the hands of the former owners and that the peasantry was ousted from land possession. As a result, immense estates came

to exist. As it became known under the Military Government, the possessions of the Biru brothers amounted to 908,840 hectares of land in a single province.¹¹

The peasantry paid one-half to two-thirds of their produce as rent to the landlord. The Civil Code in force since 1957 admits up to 75 per cent of the produce as the landlord's share. In such a case the landlord is to lend a draught animal (an ox) to the landless and cattleless peasants for the tilling of the soil. This in itself shows that the situation has nothing to do with your bourgeois-type land lease contract, inasmuch as here the landowner appropriates both the absolute and the differential land rent. The income of the tenants is so minimal as to be insufficient to maintain their families. Investments, improvements in the level of cultivation, in productivity are out of the question. The incertitude inherent in these leases is further augmented by the fact that "agreements" are made verbally and can be changed at the whim of the landlord. Hence, the peasantry is practically in a state of serfdom up to this day.

The "landed gentry"; land ownership of the nobility

The titles to land and its use held by the nobility derive from the Emperor, the ruler of the country. It is one of the traditional imperial rights that the Emperor can donate to his subjects the land which he holds from God.¹² Emperor Haile Selassie, for one, actually exercised this right up to 1974. It is so that his ministers and top government officials came in possession of lands that are the subjects of wide-ranging debates today.

The nobility thus grabbed possession of a substantial portion of all land holdings in the country: over the centuries, it further augmented its possessions, and by the mid-twentieth century one-third of all the lands in the country belonged to this social group.

Two types of titles to land evolved:

(a) The right to use the land, and to use (in fact, exploit) the serfs on the land, granted by the ruler to incumbents of certain functions. This land and the title to it reverted to the crown after the function ceased. Over the centuries, since the functions in question very often became hereditary in certain families, such land practically became the permanent possession of these latter. This type of land is called gult land in Ethiopian history: its holders are called gultegna.¹³

(b) Another type of land ownership covered tracts of land donated to important families of the nobility, unpredicated on any service performed in any function or capacity. This land was inheritable; it served as the power base of the great noble families. The land was called rist gult land, and its owners were called rist gultegna. This is how the immediate members of the Imperial family, their relatives, the rulers of the provinces and the ancient families of the southern regions occupied in the 18th to the 20th centuries came in possession of vast estates and became lords of entire provinces.

This type of land ownership was maintained until late in the nineteen-sixties.

The economic and political power of the feudal nobility as a class was based on the land. In it, the nobility effectively held the most important means of production. The peasantry was an accessory to the land held under a temporary or permanent title. Ethiopian history knows no right of

free movement, although the peasant's being bound to the soil had not been expressly declared. Ownership of the land by the nobility entrained for the peasants a duty of paying tax or rent to the feudal landowner.¹⁴

In the course of Ethiopian history, roughly three groups of nobility could be distinguished. There is the comparatively small group of aristocrats holding on to vast tracts of land. This is the group that wielded political power. Over the centuries, the families belonging to it vied among them for domination, strove to justify their ancient origin and descent from King Solomon and their right to rule. This group was not numerous, but its political, military and economic might was enormous. By land ownership and origin it was attached to this or that part of the country. In the last two centuries, the feudal families representing Shoa, the central province¹⁵ increased their power by standing for the "unification of the country" and played a significant role in the evolution of absolute monarchy.

Another, fairly numerous group of nobility was made up of the military aristocracy, chief mainstay of feudal power. Their military functions went hand in hand with the government of extensive areas, with the "temporary" possession of land in those areas while their functions lasted, the collection of tax and rent, and the enforcement of the central power's policies. Over the centuries, this group came into possession of substantial estates "of its own" and gradually consolidated its status in the areas in question.

The most populous group of nobility included those persons of noble, possibly also of common origin to which were entrusted the jobs of military and civil government and administration. These were the people that embodied the oppressive mechanism of feudal rule. They lorded it over this or that district of a large estate or this or that region of military administration. They collected tax and rent, skimming off their own dues and, in the process, getting hold of comparatively large estates. The peasant could stay on his land only if he regularly paid his rent and performed his corvée. If not, his land was taken away from him and he could stay on only by becoming a tenant. The great landowners and military commanders stayed at the Imperial court or waged its wars - in the terms of modern literature, they can be called absentee landlords - and the power over the villeins was in fact wielded by this third group of nobility.

In the southern regions of the country, the local ruling nobility came from the middle ranks of the armies of occupation: it was largely Amharic in origin.¹⁶

Part of this group of the feudal element grew rich, and its descendants played a highly important role in the country's life in the 20th century.

The role of Church and clergy

The Church is an institution of fundamental importance in Ethiopian society. The Coptic Church was one of the mainstays of the feudal order. With its titles to land and its vast estates it formed an integral part of the feudal structure. It is impossible to determine exactly the size of Church estates, but many estimates put it at one-third of all the arable land.

In vaguely centralized feudal Ethiopia Church property itself was in the hands of "local" Church princes, bishops, ecclesiastic districts and religious institutions engaged in education. Their land property was called clergy land or Church land.

The Fetha Negast,¹⁷ the Right of Kings states that, whoever be employed by the Church may require that his demands be satisfied from Church lands.

The Coptic Church in Ethiopia is the church of the establishment; its priests were mainstays of the social order, ideologues of the established power and spokesmen of its everyday apology. The clergy operated in vast numbers as compared to the size and level of development of the country. According to the latest survey, the Church - and by its intermediary, the feudal order - was served by 200,000 priests.

The priest and the family from which the priest descended obtained the right to hold and use land, and so part of Church land was not in fact in the hands of the Church, but in the hands of private citizens who contributed to the upkeep of the Church. This state of facts was exploited by the Church in the times of today's progressive reforms to allege that the Church had distributed its lands among its servants and those who assisted them. The Church as a "land reformer?".

Of course, the peasants working the land had to pay dues also after Church land. The dues belonged to the Church. Church land paid no taxes to the state or Crown. A result of grants from the Crown or the Emperor, Church land contributed to the foundation of the power of the Church as a landlord and in politics, and to its strengthening. It was impossible, or at least unthinkable, to divest the Church of its lands. The Church thus became a secular power in its own right, participating in the historical struggle for power. It blessed or damned this or that intrigue or armed clash for power. It protected the power of the high and mighty, and trained the people in patience and servitude. For these services, the Church was exempted from taxation, and indeed, provided with donations.

The high priest of the religion was the patriarch who resided at the Imperial court. The thousands of the lower clergy, on the other hand, lived like the peasant millions. It repeatedly happened in the course of history that the lower clergy arose as spokesmen of the working peasants, of the serfs and their families.

The Church as an institution, however, was a prop of the feudal order, an exponent of religious intolerance.¹⁸

Measures to "modernize" feudal land ownership

The system of feudal land ownership in Ethiopia was based on the peasants and serfs tilling the soil, and paying dues and rent to the landowners in whom the feudal land titles were vested, or to the nobility or military aristocracy who gained the right to collect such rent. This class of landowners in turn maintained the central feudal monarchy out of its income: that is, it paid taxes to the Imperial house. The Imperial (or Royal) house itself possessed extensive estates, which served to pay for military and administrative expenses. The politico-economic and military might of the ruling house was based on the Royal/Imperial estates.

The evolution of a modern administrative structure, the ever increasing cost of maintaining the military establishment and of expanding the territory of Ethiopia brought to the fore the problems of state revenue, more precisely the problem that the traditional sources of income - skimming off part of serfs' dues and taking rent on Crown land - were insufficient to cover the expenses of a central monarchy. Income from the "intermediate"

levels of taxation failed to reach the Exchequer. Tax burdens on the peasantry grew heavier and heavier, but the state was separated from the population generating revenue, the peasantry working the land.

As early as 1930, the central government under Haile Selassie embarked upon a double endeavour. Firstly, it wanted to eliminate the intermediary levels of taxation by taxing land direct, and secondly, to put an end to traditional land ownership, by placing it on a modern basis. These endeavours were frustrated by Italian Fascist occupation.

From 1941, after the liberation from under the Italian occupation, some tentative plans were made concerning modern taxation, which represented the beginnings of a "modernization" of feudal land ownership. The process was initiated by a modernization of local administration, inasmuch as the collectors of state revenue were given salaries rather than parts of the sums collected. In the subsequent years, land was categorized as high-, mediocre- and low-yield, and uniform tax rates were established. These rates were comparatively low: 15, 10, and 5 Ethiopian dollars,¹⁹ respectively, per gasha (one gasha = 40 hectares). In addition to this, the peasants had to pay the traditional feudal dues, which amounted to about two-third of the produce. Over and above any other taxes and dues, the tithe had also to be paid. State tax was paid by the peasants to the landowner in whom the title of land use or land possession was vested.

The tax laws promulgated in the nineteen-forties only increased the burdens of the peasantry, as the landlords collected the taxes from those working the land. Of course, the revenue of the state, of the central monarchy increased, too.

The two sorts of gentry's land - gult land given as a recompensation for state service and rist gult land donated for the nobility's merits - paid no taxes. On the first kind some special taxes had to be collected, but no land tax, and the collected amount had to be passed on to the state. No tax had to be paid after serfs' dues.

In the case of the second kind, the peasantry had to pay taxes, too, but the landlord could keep part of the collected land tax, which served as a source of incremental income to him.

Church lands were exempt from State taxation.

The decrees on land tax of 1944 prescribed the registration of rist-gult land and Church lands, but in practice this was never carried out. Even though legislation in 1966 terminated all such titles to land, most of the land proper remained at the hands of the owners, who could acquire "legitimate" titles by means of various machinations. In today's Ethiopia, most of the cases coming to court are concerned with issues of land property. These used to be decided until 1974 in favour of the great landowners.

Land donated as a recompensation for state functions was transferred by the law of 1966 into the private property of the holders.

True, by the early seventies all land property held under titles of nobility was abolished, but most of the land remained in possession of the former landlord. The peasants who had no land of their own became tenants in the legal sense too.

The special feature of land ownership in Ethiopia today is that legally feudal property was abolished but in effect the land remained under the same old feudal conditions of ownership. Millions of peasants leased land under feudal conditions, paying a substantial proportion (50 to 70%) of their produce to the same feudal family as before, or to a new landlord who lived on the feudal surplus rent as before. Estates of 50 to 100 thousand acres are not uncommon in Ethiopia, and some estates of a million hectares exist. Emperor Haile Selassie himself in the last years of his rule

employed the policy of land grants out of State "reserve" land to people who perhaps have not ever set foot on the land granted to them, which was tilled by thousands of tenants who then had to pay rent and dues on the land transferred into "private" property.

Social conditions until 1975 in fact remained feudal. Large masses of the peasantry lived under feudal conditions and worked their land in serfdom.

The evolution of a national bourgeoisie

The existence of a national bourgeoisie is a feature of societies embarked on the road to modernization. The Ethiopian society is a traditional one, but some novel elements did crop up and evolve in the 20th century, especially in its second half.

In the life of the traditional feudal society, the number of activities connected with manufactures, commerce etc. is on the increase. In ancient Ethiopian society these tasks were performed by foreigners or members of other tribes. Tradition has it that such activities were proper to the ancient tribe of Falasha, which retraced its origin to Menelik: some believe that their ancestors came from Judaea.

From earliest times, commerce in Ethiopia has been in the hands of Arabic tribes, of Muslim merchants. No properly Ethiopian layer of merchants and artisans evolved until the 20th century. Early on in the modern evolution of Ethiopia, however, large numbers of individuals and groups of foreign nationality entered the country to become bearers of the evolution of commerce, industry and manufactures.

In the period of colonization, large numbers of Italians, Greeks, Armenians and Indians came to settle in Ethiopia. It was these people who, in addition to the Arabs, developed the sectors of a modern economy in the country.

The Ethiopian national bourgeoisie had to grow up beside these groups of foreign extraction. Its evolution in manufactures was promoted by the demands of the army and of the nobility.

The national bourgeoisie developed from the small trades and from commerce. Its numbers are slight up to this day; its influence is slight. Its participation in modern production is not significant. Most of the industry is held by foreign interests.

The developing Ethiopian bourgeoisie was subject to a twofold influence. Firstly, that of the commercial and industrial layer of foreign origin living in Ethiopia. It could acquire capital and wage its initial ventures under the influence of this group, from which it took over its "specialized" knowledge, connections and capitalist exploiting practices. Secondly, by serving the social layer of the nobility and developing connections with the state, it came under the influence of this layer, too. In order to further develop and expand its business ventures it had to pass on some of its profits to the families of the nobility sitting in government offices. This bourgeoisie then came to be interwoven to a certain extent with the corruptly bureaucratic administration by the gentry. In its majority it engaged in non-productive ventures, bought houses and lands, and strove to get rich fast under the conditions of the feudal system.

In the rural districts and provincial towns, a bourgeoisie based on usury was interwoven with the great landowners.

Politically, this layer did not clash with the bourgeoisie of foreign extraction dominating the industry. It developed no anti-alien feelings, just as such feelings were absent from the ruling nobility too. Its primary purpose was making money and riches and it readily accepted the domination of the ruling nobility, and brought up its children in that spirit, too.

It was at the beginning of the decay of the feudal rule that this layer had the first opportunity to make itself heard. Some of its elements welcomed the changes, but largely on the basis of religious and nationalistic viewpoints.

The large majority, however, did not even go as far as to express a national sentiment. It is afraid of losing its property and fears the disruption of the connexions it has built up so far. Since part of this social layer owns land or house property, it could not so far proceed to a compromise with the antifeudal military government. So far, the Ethiopian national bourgeoisie has not unfolded any national, progressive tendencies, and its role in the elevation of the nation is less today than what it could be.

The Ethiopian "elite" (Elements of the intelligentsia in the administration and in the army)

The feudal structure and order of society was not favourable to the evolution of this group. Early in the nineteen-seventies, the number of university and equivalent-level graduates could be put at 8 to 10 thousand in Ethiopia.

This group resembles the intellectual groups of other African countries in that high-school and university education was accessible to children of the ruling classes only, who subsequently became faithful servants of the system and managers of its administration.

The unifier of the country, Emperor Menelik II employed several hundreds of foreigners when laying down the foundations of a state administration and in solving tasks of technology and commerce.²⁰ Also, early in this century, he brought into existence the first modern educational institution, the lycée patterned on a French prototype. Systematic public education was not started in the country until the nineteen-forties. The Ministry of Education was founded as late as 1943.²¹

The evolution of an intellectual elite was hampered not only by the lack of an organized public education, but by nationalistic antagonisms, too. Most of those graduated from a university or equivalent institution came from the Tigre-Amhara ethnic groups. Other groups had no access to such opportunities.

Most of those graduated from a high-school or university level institution found employment in the organs of central and regional administration. After the liberation, the number of such opportunities was almost unlimited. It was practically unheard-of for an intellectual to take up an economic or engineering profession. The University of Addis Ababa, founded in 1961, did have a faculty of technology, but the birth of a technological (let alone technocratic) intelligentsia cannot be said to have taken place before the second half of the sixties. Private enterprise, which could have raised a demand for economists and engineers of Ethiopian origin, was still very restricted in volume. Most of the jobs in question are being held down by foreigners up to this day.

Most of the intellectual elite concentrated in the capital and to some extent in the larger country towns. It developed connexions in two directions, on the one hand with the foreign experts, and on the other, with the aristocracy and nobility. Both had an influence on its style of life and work. Since political power was in the hands of the nobility, this administrative intelligentsia became a servant of the group wielding that power.

Ideas of enlightenment and progress reached them partly through the foreigners living in Ethiopia and partly through the Ethiopian intellectuals who had studied abroad.²² A further contribution was due to the foundation of the University of Addis Ababa, which became a focus of intellectual thought in the country. The faculty personnel of the University was largely expatriate.

Fermentation in the intellectual groups primarily among high-school professors and schoolteachers and in student groups, began late in the sixties. One of its factors was the fact that state administration and state bureaucracy, having attained saturation, offered no more job openings, and the youth of the country came into first-hand contact with intellectual unemployment.

The Ethiopian intelligentsia, the "elite" became acquainted with the movements in the African countries, saw and experienced the novel features of life in the independent African states, and recognized the contradictions of feudalism in Ethiopia. From this time on, a marked rift developed and unrest started in its ranks. The majority of those serving the feudal administration by the nobility retained their former standpoint of choosing assimilation as their primary aim, whereas the young intellectuals revolted against the corrupt aristocratic power of the system. In the seventies, revolt evolved into open resistance at the universities. The armed forces of coercion routed their demonstrations, killed their leaders and disbanded their organizations. The youth found itself alienated from the leadership of the country and went in search of novel paths for its intellectual evolution. Some of their ranks broke through to the ideas of socialism, and sought to establish connections with the progressive movements of the world, by the intermediary of organizations abroad. The majority of young Ethiopian intelligentsia strove to break out of the oppressive feudal atmosphere, went abroad in search of a profession and political enlightenment, of a different atmosphere. Their endeavours did not always meet with success.

The military intelligentsia with its significant numbers of young officers travelled along much the same paths. They could obtain military training at the Officers' School of the country, and some of them could study abroad.

The military cadres were even more influenced by the military movements in Africa and on other continents. The experience of illegal movements in various armies fell on fertile ground. Nationalist ideas played an even more important role among the groups of young officers than elsewhere. The feudal "patriotic" upbringing of the army officers often became a first impulse toward a true national thinking.

The Ethiopian army was strongly permeated by an aristocratic caste spirit, which further augmented the resentment of those of "lowly" origin. After the defeat of the military revolt of 1960, illegal study circles were formed to discuss the problems connected with the elevation of the nation.

We do not know as yet the exact nature of the connection between revolt and fermentation in the intellectual circles of the military and of the civilians. The civilian and military intellectual elite, originally intended for the service of the feudal Imperial power, fell apart into factions in the last

few years, and some of the young cadres changed from supports of feudalism into agents of its overthrow and of the construction and evolution of a novel society.

Evolution of the working class

Industrial evolution and urbanization could not start in the country until the expulsion of the Italian Fascists. In Eritrea, the northeastern province of the country, some industries came to exist earlier on, but this was due largely to the influence, and was in the hands, of the occupants.

The numbers of the working class attained 250,000 early in the nineteen-seventies. Those employed in large-scale industries are comparatively scarce but today they attain 100,000. Most of the workers are scattered among construction projects, in traffic, and among a number of other small units. The number of workers in small-scale industries is significant.

A large majority, indeed, almost the totality of the working class are so called first-generation workers whose parents came from a village or from the layer of the urban poor, and who now work under the class-forming conditions of factory or manufactural production. A substantial portion of the working class consists of unskilled persons, most of them trained-on-the-job, with little school education, a few classes of primary school at best. The living conditions of most of them are hardly better than those of their relatives living in the villages or of the groups of suburban population subsisting on occasional jobs. The workers are embedded into a populous stratum of unemployed, so that the capitalist or feudal employer has a wide choice and a club to wield over those actually employed. The gates of factories and plants are permanently decorated with shields: "No vacancies."

The path of development of the working class and that of the structural evolution of society are much the same in Ethiopia as in the other developing countries of Africa and of the world in general.²³ In Ethiopia, this evolution was hampered by the power of the feudal institutions, and by the limited scope of internal sodo-economic processes, but it could not prevent the formation of new working-class forces. The evolution into a class is not a fait accompli in Ethiopia, either, but the novel relationship to the means of production exerted a novel, formative influence on those social groups which are working in new ways and under new conditions in an Ethiopia whose system is overwhelmingly feudal.

Organization or the demand for organization is another novel phenomenon among the workers consolidating into a class. Lenin in his highly significant treatise on Russia, "The Evolution of Capitalism in Russia"²⁴ exposed how the organization, coherence and mutual assistance of the workers became an important lever in the evolution of a class, an important tool of its formation. Some elements of this process are to be seen and experienced among the conditions of backward Ethiopia, too.

In Ethiopia also it was groups of mutual assistance that developed first, making use of earlier experience. These assistance groups are formed on the jobs; they mutually assist each other in their struggle for better working conditions and in collective bargaining. The first significant action was the strike in the year 1947 on the Society for Mutual Assistance, incorporating the workers of the French Ethiopian Railway Society,²⁵ as a

result of which the government recognized the Society for Mutual Assistance as the representative of the workers and as spokesman for their demands. The workers of various enterprises, of textile mills, of the large Dutch sugar factory at Wonji etc. made themselves heard repeatedly in the nineteen-fifties, thus demonstrating that the workers have embarked upon a struggle for their rights and that the organization of the working class is maturing.

In its endeavour to attract foreign capital into the country, the feudal government suppressed all turbulence and "indiscipline". In this, it found a good partner in foreign capital. The system in its turn ensured cheap labour to the foreigners.

After the attempted coup of 1960, however, the question of "reforms" rose to everyday actuality in Ethiopia too. Pressure from below, combined with the "enlightenment" of the Imperial rule, brought trade unions into existence. The workers' organizations of the factories united to form the CELU, the Confederation of Ethiopian Labour Unions.

In 1962, the Government enacted a Law of Labour Relations²⁶ which recognized the right of the workers to get organized and to unite, and the possibility of collective bargaining. The state adhered to and ensured its role of arbitrator in labor disputes and in overseeing trade union activity. It brought into existence a Ministry of Development and Social Affairs, which oversees and exercises control over the trade unions and keeps records concerning them. The Emperor nominated a Labour Council including representatives of the government, of the employers and of the employed. The decisive vote belongs to the government representative. Every labour dispute has to be brought before this authority. Only after a moratorium of 60 days could any measures be taken to end disputes "unilaterally". This meant that no strikes could be called earlier than that, either. In practice, the law reduced the chances of a strike to a minimum.

Knowing the feudal practice of the Ethiopian government, these disputes were finally submitted to the "benevolent, fatherly" decision of the Emperor who, as supreme arbitrator, calmed down the exploited workers and maintained them on the leash of the slogans of God and peace.

The trade union, which by the end of 1974 counted some 100,000 members, came to exist in 1962 as the result of the union and alliance of local trade union groups. In promoting its existence and in organizing its headquarters, a significant role was played by the American AFL-CIO trade union centre. Its political trend and the intensity of its "class struggle" were largely determined by this midwifely contribution. The organization has often been dubbed an "imperial trade union" by both workers and intellectuals, to express their criticism concerning its activity in protecting workers' rights.

The above laws did not permit the trade union to organize the employees of state enterprises or of institutions. Now since the state was one of the principal employers, this was in itself a considerable restriction of its activity. For instance, employees of the electric and water utilities, of the post and telegraph offices were excluded from this sort of organization to start with.

Even under such conditions, the trade union performed important work, brought a number of collective contracts into existence and protected workers' rights as well as it could. There were among its leaders - despite all selection to the contrary - people who represented a policy of class struggle and educated the workers in the defence of their own affairs and in international class solidarity. They maintained links with the trade unions of the socialist countries.²⁷ The emerging consciousness

of the working class became an important factor of social movement in the spring of 1974.

The structure of the Ethiopian society is fundamentally feudal in its nature. Although, formally, feudal land ownership has been abolished, the peasants are in effect still serf-tenants of the large estates. Up to 1974, the country was ruled by the feudal aristocracy. The state organization was a centralized feudal monarchy. The Emperor ruled as a monarch, although a parliament and a central government were in existence.

Military and political power were in the hands of the feudal aristocracy. This social class prevented any sort of serious economic and social progress. It became interwoven in a corruptly bureaucratic fashion with foreign capital, with the alien bourgeoisie instabled in the country and with part of the emerging nationalist bourgeoisie. It controlled the country by exploiting and inciting open and covert national antagonisms.

Resorting to the feudal slogan of "divide and rule", it oppressed every action of the lower social strata. It attempted to develop an intelligentsia from among its own ranks, and to attach it to itself.

The social contradictions and the ambitious new strata and groups of society brought to the fore the militant movements and organizations of the intelligentsia and of the working class, which molded and developed their class and social consciousness and behaviour. The popular military movement, a means of expressing social contradictions and demands, led to the initiation of social change in Ethiopia.

Principal features of Ethiopian economy up to 1974

The economy of Ethiopia is weakly developed with a distorted structure, a low-volume industry and a very backward agriculture, highly dependent on commercial and financial links maintained especially with capitalist countries.

The country is classed within the "least-developed" group, the criteria of which are the following: gross national product per capita, less than US \$ 100 per year; the industry contributes less than 10% to GNP; the proportion of literates is less than 20% of the population. The per capita GNP of Ethiopia was US \$ 84 in 1973 (at 1970 prices); the contribution of industry was 9 or 10%, and the proportion of literates did not attain 12%. Of the 16 least-developed countries of Africa, only Burundi, Chad, Lesotho, Mali, Rwanda and Upper Volta present a sadder and more depressing image.

The feudal social structure and political system of the country used all the means at the disposal of the state administration to perpetuate the exploitation of the working masses - workers, peasants -, to maintain them in misery, and to keep up the unjust distribution of wealth and income. This rendered the burdens of backwardness even heavier.

Ethiopia is a backward agrarian country. Fifty-three per cent of GNP are produced by agriculture. Only 9% of the land is under cultivation. About one-third of this vast country is desert or semi-desert.

The conditions of land ownership - as we have seen above - are of a feudal nature. Two-thirds of all the cultivated area is made up by small leases, where the rent took two-thirds of the produce.

Agrotechnology did not go beyond a very primitive form of the wooden plough. The most typical tools of cultivation include hand tools

such are sickles and hoes. Over most of the country, carts and wagons are entirely unknown. The principal "means of transportation" is the donkey.

The road network of the country is undeveloped especially in the rural areas. Some 60% of Ethiopia's populations lives at the distance of a half-day's march from what is considered a "good" road locally.

Agricultural productivity is very low. Estimates fraught with wide margins of error, made in connexion with the third five-year plan (1968-73) assessed wheat yield per hectare at 7.7 quintals²⁸ (0.77 metric tons). Over most of the country, no manure or fertilizer is being used. Manure is collected by the population as fuel, and only the great farms or commercially oriented large estates can afford fertilizer.²⁹

Ethiopia is very rich in livestock. The stock of cattle is estimated at 26 million heads. The number of livestock per head of population is one of the highest in the world. This stock, however, is of very poor quality. The breed being cultivated is the zebu, which is resistant to drought and to hardship, but has very low yields of meat and milk. The average weight of a zebu is not above 200 kg; its daily yield of milk is 1 to 2 litres. Even this stock loses 30 to 40 per cent of its weight in the dry season.

Cattle-breeding is of the pastoral and to a considerable extent even of the nomadic grazing type. Since water economy over most of the country is non-existent or very primitive, this kind of grazing brings very poor results.³⁰

Most of the peasant farms and, in fact, most of the population are outside a money economy. The rural population leads a life based on natural subsistence economy. Their way of life is poorly; not more than 2 to 3 per cent are literate; there is hardly any medical care. Even in a natural subsistence-economy context, alimentation is low-grade. The daily allowance of calories is low. One of the textbooks of Addis Ababa University states the daily intake of calories to be 1566 for the rural population and 2455 for the town-dwellers.³¹

The low agricultural productivity, the slow rate of evolution of production resulted in a shortage of foodstuffs in the country. Together with the low rates of consumption and poor marketing situation, these factors result in a relative shortage in some years and an absolute shortage in others. The annual volume of agricultural production increased by 2.0 to 2.5 per cent per year on an average over the last 10 to 15 years, which, taken together with the 2.0 to 2.5 per cent per year increase in population, is equivalent to stagnation. Bequele and Chole (op. cit.), analyzing the data of the sixties, predicted an acute shortage of foodstuffs in the first half of the seventies, which did in fact emerge by 1972-1973.³²

The government in its successive five-year plans did not pay sufficient attention to the development of agriculture. Only 5 to 10 per cent of all the investment and development planned and realized went into agriculture,³³ and even these sums largely served the interests and development potentials of the large estates.

The condition of the peasantry, and the situation of agriculture as a whole, were utterly backward and tension-laden. Large masses of the peasantry lived in abject misery; covert and open unemployment attained vast proportions. The hundreds of thousands of the town-dwelling poor were further dwelled by rural exodus. Although 90% of the population were "active" in agriculture, the country was faced with a food shortage. The technico-economic development of production was hampered by the conditions of feudal exploitation. The "development plans" and decrees of the government served the expansion of the large farms, the further entrancement of economic and social contradictions, the "conservation" of the wretched con-

ditions of life of poor and landless peasants. This state of the Ethiopian agriculture was a serious obstacle to all manner of progress. The situation had to be remedied.

Industry is a rapidly developing sector of the Ethiopian economy, whose evolution took place over the last 20 to 30 years. Still, even in the mid-seventies it is producing less than 10% of GNP.

Statistical data concerning industry are very scanty. The Ethiopian Statistical Yearbook, issue of 1972, mentions 401 industrial establishments, with a total of 51,000 employees. The average yearly wages of these amounted to E \$ 1296 per head; that is, the per capita monthly income was around E \$ 100.³⁴

Industrial structure is the usual for developing countries. Dominant sectors include the textile and leather industry - 47 to 48 per cent in Ethiopia - and the alimentary industry, nearly 24 per cent.

Industrial development occupied an important place in the economic policy of the government, but the country's own resources available for the purpose were very scanty. Industrialization was thus financed out of foreign capital, bilateral and multilateral loans and aid. For the third five-year plan, E \$ 565 m have been allotted to the development of industry and manufactures, half of which should have been realized out of private funds. Clearly, the financial basis of industrial development is narrow both in the relative and in the absolute sense (industrial investment amounts to 15 per cent of total investment).

This is where it is indicated to raise the question of Ethiopia's indebtedness. National debt in June 1972 amounted to E \$ 558 m, a heavy burden on the national economy. The servicing of foreign debt consumed more than 10 per cent of export proceeds, which is high even in an African context.

The obstacles to industrialization include not only the lack of capital but also the small number of trained people. Expatriate experts entering the country in connection with credits furnished by Western capitalist countries demand and obtain salaries that are a heavy burden to this developing country, hamstringing its development together with the high prices of materials and machines.

In recent times, a rather unexpected new obstacle to development cropped up in the form of a too narrow market. The industrial policy of import substitution in particular came up against the restricted volume of the home market. The living standards of the working masses had not improved, and had, indeed, deteriorated in agriculture, so that there were no buyers for the products of the budding home industry. The rich and well-to-do groups of society preferred imported products to home-made ones.

The government tried to introduce export incentives, but the industry is not as yet competitive against the trade partners of the country, most of which are developed capitalist countries. No reconstruction aimed at technological renovation is being carried out in Ethiopian industry. The tendency was to augment production by increasing the intensity of work, by tightening exploitation. Capitalist inflation had a highly deleterious influence on Ethiopia, too. The prices of investment and consumer goods increased, but the incomes of the population, the wages and salaries did not. The daily wage of an unskilled factory worker was about E \$ 1 (that is, hardly E \$ 30 per month). A quintal (0.1 metric ton) of teff (the staple Ethiopian grain) cost E \$ 25 to 30; that is, the monthly wage of an unskilled worker was insufficient to buy that much food.

Wretched living standards, then, were not restricted to the rural population but the large masses of urban workers were afflicted by them.

too. Industrial development could not keep pace with the rate of rural exodus, the rate of increase of the labour force. Towns were characterized by a distressing unemployment situation. Unrest and discontent, overt actions and demands by the workers and social tensions in general took a further increase in the years 1973-74.³⁵

In an assessment of the national economy, another important factor to be considered is the foreign trade situation of the country, its financial balance and its budget.

The role of foreign trade in the national economy is not significant. Exports amount to 7 to 10 per cent of gross domestic product (the average of the 16 least developed African countries is about 15 per cent). For instance, exports expressed in terms of GDP attain twice the Ethiopian rate - 20 per cent - in Tanzania or Uganda.³⁶ The significance of this state of facts is that it keeps Ethiopia's base of export proceeds narrow; the country cannot procure investment goods out of its proper financial resources, and is consequently obliged to rely on outside sources - aid and loan - for its development.

The structure of foreign trade is unbalanced; almost 100 per cent of exports is agricultural in nature; the largest single item is coffee, the principal export commodity of Ethiopia. The share of coffee now amounts to 30 to 40 per cent, but in 1970 and before it was as high as 60%.³⁷ In recent years, the share of other agricultural products rose rapidly, and so did to a lesser extent also that of industrial semi-finished goods, which now amount to about 6 per cent of total exports.

Imports include in their majority finished industrial goods, chemicals, metal products, machinery and vehicles. A point worthy of notice is that the share of machinery is on a sustained decrease since 1971, indicating a reduction in investment activity. One factor contributing to this is that owing to capitalist inflation and to the worsening of the terms of trade much more money must be spent on raw materials including crude oil and on chemicals. For instance, the amount spent on crude oil in the first half of 1974 was 2.5 times as high as in the comparable period of 1973.

Despite these difficulties, the foreign trade situation gradually improved from 1970 on up to early in 1974. The export prices of goods exported by Ethiopia in 1973 exceeded by 35 per cent the comparable prices in 1968, whereas import prices rose by about 16 per cent only. The terms of trade improved by some 20 per cent. This trend persisted up to February 1974.³⁸ From then on it was followed by a gradual deterioration. The terms of trade started to deteriorate in October 1974.

The balance of payments of the country was passive throughout the sixties; in the seventies, there was a change for the better, with rather spectacular improvements in 1972, and especially in 1973 and early in 1974. Over this period, the reserve situation of the country improved (to E \$ 475m by the end of 1973, equalling more than one year's imports). The trend was maintained up to September 1974, but reserves have been reduced since.

Ethiopia's foreign trade difficulties were further enhanced by the fact that 60 to 70 per cent of its foreign trade was carried on with the capitalist world, and the fluctuations of the capitalist markets had a deleterious influence upon the Ethiopian national economy. The intra-African trade of Ethiopia is restricted (8 to 10 per cent). Up to 1974, socialist countries accounted for 7 to 8 per cent of total foreign trade. Since foreign trade was overwhelmingly in the hands of aliens, - Arabs, Armenians, Italians, - it was not suitably matched to the economic development of the country as a whole.

For an understanding of the situation it is important to consider some features of the Ethiopian budget. State revenue amounted to some 20% of GNP. Some 75% of this came from sources within the country; the remaining quarter was covered by foreign aid and loans. That is, about 15% of GDP passed into the budget. Despite considerable contributions from outside sources, the budget was deficitary. The deficit, which usually amounted to 3 or 4 per cent, was covered by the emission of state bonds.

The greatest single item on the debit side of the budget was the sum spent on the army and on internal security and peacekeeping. Making up one-third of current expenses in the seventies, it significantly exceeded the sum total of social expenditure including public education, culture, health, welfare and pensions. Another substantial item in the budget was the servicing of internal and foreign debt, which amounted to 17 to 20 % of the budget in recent years.³⁹

The budget was faced with permanent problems. Taxation was beset with all features of feudal corruption. The ruling capitalist and feudal groups paid very little tax if any, profiting by "legal" exemptions granted by the Emperor. The taxes paid by the peasantry were invariably below the expectations, as a consequence of their miserable condition.

Institutions financed out of the budget were in permanent difficulties. Schools and hospitals had to be closed down. One of the finest hospitals of the capital, financed out of a foreign loan, stood empty for two years in lack of funds to operate it. Even the army was starved of funds. Millions disappeared at the hands of the top army brass. This was one of the reasons for the military revolt in 1974.

Socio-economic contradictions

The above outline of social and economic situation of the country reveals an Ethiopian society hamstrung by feudal domination, and an Ethiopian economy backward both structurally and in its level of evolution, dependent on the capitalist world. The country was pregnant with social tensions. The most acute contradictions were the following:

(a) The contradiction between the feudal ruling class and a peasantry living in misery. From 75 to 80% of the peasants were tenants of feudal and other estates under insupportable conditions. One-half to three-quarters of their produce, of the fruits of their toil were expropriated by the landowners. Agriculture did not prosper. Even the simple reproduction of the means of production was not ensured. Most of the peasantry remained at a level of natural subsistence farming, and a market economy did not exist except under ancient primitive conditions.

(b) The emerging working class representing modern industrial development lived under a double oppression. Its evolution was repressed by the feudal aristocracy, on the one hand, while, on the other, it was exploited and oppressed to a substantial extent by foreign capitalist groupings. All forms of oppression were legalized by an aristocratic feudal administration, which considered any class action by the workers illegal and anti-patriotic.

(c) The national bourgeoisie was Janus-faced in more than one sense. It oppressed the working groups and cooperated with feudalism, while seething with discontent against the feudal conditions that hampered

its self-assertion. It looked for partners in the capitalist and feudal circles of the country, but had to become subservient to imperialist capitalist ventures, as it could not stand up against the financially strong, great corporations. National bourgeoisie was an insecure group fraught with contradictions.

(d) Ethiopian intelligentsia first developed after World War II. Its ranks attached to state administration were highly corrupt. A substantial part of the intellectuals in education and in the economic and commercial pursuits gradually recognized the true face of feudalism and prepared to stand up to it. The majority of the student body, on the other hand - despite its well-to-do social background - opposed the bureaucratic system of feudalism as early as the nineteen-sixties.

(e) The army, intended to serve the feudal system of society, became for a number of causes a rather insecure "bastion". The rank and file consisted of peasant elements, and part of its young officer corps, despite careful selection and training, grew disgruntled with the system under the influence of progressive nationalist ideas. These officers who saw the backwardness of their country and its contradictory role within the developing world became restless and dissatisfied with the contradictions between the living conditions of the masses and those of the feudal ruling order, which latter they were called upon to defend.

(f) The country lived among conditions of nationalistic contradictions fostered by the feudal aristocracy. The dominant Amharic chauvinism of the central power oppressed all other nationalities. It intended to introduce education in only one language, Amharic, in all schools. The local organizations of self-rule and parliamentarism in Eritrea were liquidated; those rising up against oppression were expelled from the country. An Amharic administration was imposed in areas of Galla majority. The country was administered on the principle of "divide and rule". Nationalities were hostile to each other. Even the religious persuasions of the people were exploited to incite antagonisms.

(g) There was a contradiction between the foreign policy of the country and its internal feudal order. Despite its close cooperation with the capitalist powers and its dependence on US military assistance, Ethiopia played an important role in creating African unity, in the movement of non-aligned countries. There were of course contradictions in realizing this policy; questions of social progress were evaded, anticolonialist postures were often purely vocal; but the principal obstacle of all was the Imperial feudal background.

(h) The internal, "purely" economic contradictions of the national economy also played an important role. The backward feudal agriculture hampered the evolution of industry and of the market which industry needed so much. Savings and investments were at a very low level. Economic development was predicated upon outside capital. The foreign connections of the one-sided, distorted economy further intensified this dependence. The capitalist powers used every means to perpetuate this dependence, although even they occasionally "urged" the modification of the feudal framework, the evolution of a "market economy", the augmentation of buying power.

The above enumerated social and economic contradictions constituted a complex framework within which the oppression and misery of the people, of the working classes resulted in an atmosphere of social discontent and tension. Bitterness and discontent began to surface at more and more places, on more and more occasions. The only thing lacking was the proper organization, the proper action and the favourable occasion. It was the army and the student body that appeared the most likely, best-

organized force to start a change. The change did in fact start in the spring of 1974, to grow into a determined movement and action.

Revolt against the feudal power

Contradictions and tensions were so marked and so acute that the first difficulty of some seriousness that came along in the life of the country triggered open revolt. The difficulty in question was the drought afflicting many of the country's provinces, combined with the wave of inflation resulting from the oil price hike.

Units of the army revolted one after another in February 1974, demanding more human conditions, higher pay and social changes. Handbills strewn in Addis Ababa on March 4, 1974 stated the following demands of the army:⁴⁰

1. Free press,
2. The right to demonstrate,
3. Political parties and elections,
4. Agrarian reform,
5. Improving the working conditions of workers and employees,
6. The liberation of political prisoners,
7. Free schooling,
8. Price controls,
9. Indictment of the former government which dispossessed the poor of their lands,
10. The pay of the army and of others is to be indexed to the increases in the cost of living,
11. The representatives of the army and of the population are to constitute a committee in order to realize their demands.

The students, pedagogues and workers likewise demanded human rights and social changes.

The student body further raised its voice against the influence of alien powers, and emphasized equality and the recognition of the rights of the poor. Early on in the movement the leaders of the student body were for supporting the struggle of the army.

The demands of organized labour were formulated by the Council of Ethiopian Labour Unions,⁴¹ in the following main points.

1. The country's statutes relating to labour are to be changed radically. The right to strike must be legalized.
2. Daily wages are to be raised immediately (the CEIU claimed E \$ 3 per day). Wages are to be indexed to the cost of living.
3. Pensions for workers.
4. Price controls.
5. Public education must be reformed and must open up opportunities for workers' children.
6. Measures against unemployment.
7. In the event of the non-satisfaction of these demands, a general strike will be called.

In this first phase, the nature of the demands and of the movement in general was a revolt against the corrupt bureaucratic administration, without overtly turning against the Emperor and the Imperial institution. The army demanded civil rights; the people wanted better living standards, changes in policy and administration. All groups agreed as to the need for agrarian reform.

The demands of the trade unions were rudimentary but determined workers' demands aimed at bettering the workers' living standards and at realizing the preconditions of a political and economic struggle. Even at first, the student body rose up determinedly against the feudal system and for the reduction or elimination of alien influence. In this phase, however, the movement in its entirety stayed at the revolt level; it lacked a uniform programme, and the coordination of leadership did not go beyond a rudimentary stage, either.⁴²

The struggle continued. The rebels' aim was to bring unity to their ranks. They strove to realize a minimal program by criticizing and fighting against the most blatant injustices of feudal society and administration. They took action against corruption and the misuse of power. In that context, they demanded the constitution of a Country-wide Control Commission of Inquiry.⁴³ This proved to be highly useful as a means of informing the public, with the result that the masses came to feel and express more trust towards the soldiers leading the movement and more impatience against the corrupt leadership. A grand tactical struggle ensued between the military who refused to tip their hand and the freshly nominated Imperial government.

The recently nominated government headed by Endelkachew Makonnen promised certain changes in civil rights in order to save the power of the feudal-bourgeois ruling class. The Emperor proclaimed a reform of the constitution on March 5:⁴⁴

- The prime minister is to be responsible to Parliament,
- the civil rights of the population must be ensured,
- a modification of the Constitution is to be prepared.

The Endelkachew government took steps to prepare the way for keeping its promises. It envisaged an agrarian reform. Parliament, however, refused to enact even the Lease Act which would in effect have brought no change at all.

The overall atmosphere in the country revealed the masses to be dissatisfied with the changes, with the activity of the government. The demands of the workers remained unfulfilled. Many of the old institutions as well as the prime minister himself qualified the general strike of the workers as unlawful; the organization of trade unions in the state institutions was not authorized. The Prime Minister referred to the rules of the old law and order, saying that his hands were bound by those.⁴⁵

The situation became even tenser throughout the country. Guerrilla warfare flared up again in Eritrea province. The government was not master of the situation either in the capital or in the countryside.

A sort of double rule came to exist in the country. The army obeyed the Military Committee that had come into existence. The top military command was paralyzed. The room for maneuvers of the government was reduced to a minimum. The rural districts, however, stood under the rule of the local administration which paid allegiance to the feudal circles. The peasants did not move: they wanted to wait and see whether something happened to the land and to the feudal system; they mistrusted the new military movement.

The struggle had to be fought in the capital and in the larger provincial centres. Late in June the Army once more detained the members of the previous government and started a fight against important strongholds of the feudal system. Late in July the military caused the backing and filling government of Endelkachew to abdicate. The next government was formed by Michael Imru, a politician of progressive ideas and of noble birth.⁴⁶ The determined curtailing of the powers held by the Emperor and his immediate

retinue and a liquidation of the Imperial institutions of feudalism was initiated. The private cabinet of the Emperor, the principal base of counterrevolutionary actions, was liquidated. The Imperial court of appeals ceased to function. Corruption in the Imperial family was highlighted. The plants in which the imperial family invested the money it had abstracted from public funds were confiscated or nationalized. The Haile Selassie Fund, organized for philanthropic and social purposes, but in fact serving the manipulations and enrichment of the Imperial family, was dissolved.

The Coordinating Committee of the Army continued to organize its forces and succeeded in partially clarifying its ideological line. Early in September, the new slogan "Ethiopia before all" (in Amharic: Ethiopia Tikdem⁴⁷) was launched. The slogan reveals nationalist ideas. In its contents, however, it went beyond those even in the first phases. The primary stipulation of the slogan was the service of the nation and of the people in the spirit of the changes taking place in the country. The whole nation must be prepared for those changes. The goal was to unify the nation in the struggle for the new achievements and to defend the country against external forces. This multinational state had not only become ripe for social reforms, but the national antagonisms within it also demanded urgent solutions. The Eritrean problem itself was a complex of grave internal, national, religious as well as social problems, about which the first signs of outside intervention started to appear. The main task of the Coordinating Committee was to create national unity in the face of internal reaction and external intervention.

Dethronement of the Emperor. Formation of a Military Government

The policy of restricting and annihilating the forces of feudalism led of necessity to the removal and taking into custody of the head of feudal power, Emperor Haile Selassie, and to the creation of a new administration. The Military Proclamation issued on September 12, 1974 justified this measure in the following terms:⁴⁸

(1) The Ethiopian People always looked up with good faith on the Crown as the symbol of the country's unity, but Haile Selassie who over his fifty-year reign misused the power, dignity and decency of his position is incapable in his old age to take this great responsibility.

(2) The parliamentary system is reactionary. Its members served the interest of the ruling aristocracy, and refused solutions to the most fundamental national issues such as the agrarian reform. Parliament was hostile to the slogan Ethiopia Tikdem and had to be dissolved.

(3) The Constitution of 1955 vested absolute power in the Emperor. Its provisions merely served to keep up pretences vis-a-vis the world, and impeded the current movement. It had to be suspended.

The Military Committee of the Armed Forces recognized Prince Asfa Wossen, son of the Emperor and heir to the throne, as the future King of Ethiopia. (This decision was subsequently⁴⁹ altered as the protracted illness of the crown prince prevented him from performing his functions: the question of the supreme authority of Ethiopia will be decided by plebiscite.)

Parliament was dissolved, the Constitution suspended, and the functions of the government were assumed by the Military Committee. The Committee of the Armed Forces is the institution of supreme authority in

the state; its president is the provisional head of state. The Committee functions as a collective body.

The Armed Forces Committee issued a declaration concerning its political and social goals, which, in the spirit of Ethiopia Tikdem, included the social and political reshaping of the country. The program declared a determined anti-feudal policy. In the field of foreign affairs, it chose a line of non-alignment.

The principal statements of the Declaration are as follows.⁵⁰

- (1) The equality of peasants, workers and all citizens is to be ensured.
- (2) Tribal and religious divisions are to be eliminated. Differences in living standards are to be reduced.
- (3) An agrarian reform is to be carried out.
- (4) The living standards of the people will be elevated among others by developing health services and public education.
- (5) Economic activity in the country is to be encouraged, and so is local production.
- (6) Nationalism and patriotism have to be reinforced as everybody's personal convictions.
- (7) Ethiopian foreign policy is strictly non-aligned. Ethiopia maintains friendly relations with all friendly countries of the world, especially with the African countries, and among them with Egypt, the Sudan and the neighbouring Kenya and Somalia. It honours the Charters of the Organization of African Unity and of the United Nations.

Power was concentrated in the hands of the military government the declared program of which promised decisive changes. The routing of the main forces of feudal power was begun.

Over and above the consolidation of power, there was an urgent need for the formulation of true aims, in order that the new administration might win over the masses. In this respect, the most important task was the elucidation of the social content of the slogan Ethiopia Tikdem, of nationalist conception, and the laying down of a true political line. This program was formulated in a matter of a few weeks. Its principal traits may be summed up by stating that Ethiopia needs progressive social change, feudalism must be liquidated, and the country must be developed for the good and in the interest of the people. The country must reinforce its connections with the peace-loving countries of the world. Let us cite a few statements of the program:⁵¹

- (1) Majority interests are to take precedence over minority interests.
- (2) Equal rights to work - everyone is to participate equally in the development of the country.
- (3) A system of public education conformable to the traditions of the country is to be realized, in which the rights of the masses are to be asserted.
- (4) Health and welfare is to serve the interests of the people.
- (5) A popular government acting for the good of the people is required.
- (6) All forces are to be united and concentrated upon the development of agriculture and, more broadly, of the national economy as a whole. State control is to be strengthened.
- (7) Ethiopia is to join forces with the progressive forces of the world, and to struggle in close friendship with the neighbouring countries for freedom and independence against all possible aggressions.

The socio-economic nature of the changes was not broached in this document which emphasized and exposed the need for social change and for increasing the role of the state but did not touch upon problems of property although it took a pledge to liquidate feudal land ownership. The means of doing so have not, however, been worked out up to that time, and this is for two reasons:

(a) The first task was to ensure the stability of military government within the country, to clarify its relationship to the various groups of society which, although agreeing on the overthrow of the feudal administration, did not approve government by the military.

(b) Within its own ranks, the military government had to clarify the nature of the social changes it envisaged, its political goals.

After the dethronement of the Emperor, the military government was faced with the problem that the trade union leaders and part of the intelligentsia construed the expression "popular government" as meaning that the administration of the country should be taken over by a civilian government. This attitude expressed at the same time the striving of the reaction to discredit the most progressive force capable of guaranteeing the best-organized change, the army and its representative body, the Military Council.

The right-wing leaders of the trade unions at the country-wide conference of the trade union council⁵² took a stand against the military government. The conference passed a resolution opposing the formation of a military government. Profiting by the decision of the government to interdict any demonstration, procession or strike, they declared that the government deprived the masses of their elementary rights.

This opposition divided the masses and weakened the mass base of the government. Some of the organizations of CELU opposed the resolutions of the Central Council, but the split remained. Later on, the government detained the rightist trade union leaders.

Similar problems cropped up in connection with the student movement. Some of the university youth held confused anarchistic "ultra-leftist" views: their leaders hewed to petty bourgeois principles that led them to an unrealistic assessment of the situation. A certain influence of Maoist ideology could also be felt. These elements demanded a "popular government" instead of a military one. They attacked the plan of the government to send the students into the countryside on a campaign of instruction.⁵³ They spread the notion that the government organized the campaign of instruction and work merely to get rid of a potential opposition.

All this reinforced the opposition of the petty bourgeoisie and bourgeois-feudal elements to a military government declaring war on the feudal system. It hindered the true clarification of the aims of the movement and the unfolding of those aims. The masses took up an expectant attitude fraught with numerous factors of incertitude. The intelligentsia, and even a substantial part of the administrative apparatus, failed to back the new measures.

Even within the ranks of the Military Council a great deal of insecurity could be felt. General Aman Andom, President of the Provisional Military Administrative Council together with some members of the Council, had views concerning social transformation that differed from those of the majority.

Assessing the economic situation of the country, General Aman Andom took a stand in favour of the free movement and activity of private capital, foreign capital in particular. To judge by his declarations, the General preferred a change in a bourgeois direction, whereas the majority

of the Military Council favoured a limitation of capitalism and of exploitation, and insisted on a more plebeian type of social change, although their views were not clearly projected by the documents that were made public.

There was dissent between the President of the Council and the elected military body also concerning a number of other important issues. The behaviour of the general bred insecurity in the masses. His style of leadership did not lack dictatorial elements.⁵⁴

In a few months, the crisis came to a head. There was an overt break in which the President of the Council strove to divide the army proper. In the course of the resulting conflict, the general was shot dead in an armed confrontation. Fifty-seven leading representatives of the old system, responsible for the crimes of the past, were executed.

The military movement had extremely hard times to weather, but finally the road to political settlement and to true social reforms was opened. The popular-patriotic movement forged in the struggle against feudal rule and led by the military movement could declare the program and action project of true social transformation.

Declaration of the political and social principles of socialism

On December 20, 1974 the Military government issued a declaration that laid down the foundations of its program and intended actions. It announced the creation of Ethiopian Socialism.⁵⁵ After a historical introduction, the declaration exposed the philosophy of the movement, which could serve as a basis for the building of a new Ethiopia.

This philosophy had to satisfy three criteria.

- (a) It should spring forth from the ground of Ethiopian culture and history.
- (b) It should be conformable to the interests of the masses and carry Ethiopia closer to its progressive neighbours.
- (c) It should permit the solution of the political and economic issues of long standing.

This philosophy - according to the Declaration - could be none other than Ethiopian Socialism. It must include the following features:

- (1) To ensure equality regardless of differences in language, religion and sex.
- (2) To ensure that majority interests take precedence over minority interests.
- (3) To introduce a broad system of self-government.
- (4) Let people be esteemed according to their work. Exploitation and parasitism are to be condemned on a society-wide basis.
- (5) The unity of Ethiopia must be upheld. This is a holy tenet of the entire people's creed.

Concerning basic political aims, the Declaration stated the following.

(a) Organization of government

The people has the right to self-government. Self-government is to be realized at all levels. A system of collective decision-making is to be introduced.

(b) Political organization

A country-wide political party is to be organized to unify all

progressive forces into a coherent front. The party is to be a political means of promoting

- the emergence of leaders from the people,
- the discussion of the people's affairs by the people,
- the explication of plans and conceptions by the leaders,
- the realization of reforms with the cooperation of the people,
- the control of the leaders by the people.

(c) Economic policy

It should serve the interests of the community. The principal issue is to eliminate poverty. Economic exploitation must be prevented. "The economic resources of the nation are to be brought into the possession and under the control and direction of the people."

Sectors of importance to development are to be brought under state ownership or control. Other sectors are to be developed and controlled according to guidelines issued by the state. A private sector may continue to exist as long as it does not oppose the interests of society.

Agriculture as the principal sector of the economy requires particular attention. Land is to be placed under public ownership. Communal, cooperative and private farms are to exist.

The country is to be based and economically developed on the principle of self-reliance. Foreign capital is given the opportunity to participate in development.

Ethiopia being a backward country, it is imperative for it to develop as rapidly as possible.

There is a special chapter on social policy, more or less in keeping with the above considerations.

(d) Foreign policy

It is intended to create peaceful and fraternal links with the neighbouring countries, and, in a broader context, with the peoples of Africa. "At the international level, Ethiopia is pursuing a policy to promote general peace and progress ..." It opposes colonialism, neocolonialism and imperialism. It defends its unity and independence, pursues a non-aligned policy, participates in the struggle for world peace, progress and cooperation.

The declaration is concerned with the most important political issues and can as such be regarded as a program. It rightly insists on the incorporation of Ethiopian inheritance into the theoretical foundations and to use it as a guideline in solving day-to-day problems. It does not touch upon the question of an ideological basis: the problem of a theory permitting to understand and explain the evolution of society and to chart its future progress, that is, the problem of scientific socialism has not been raised. Although the expression "Ethiopian Socialism" is placed into a more or less proper perspective, it is necessary to add that the term is construed to mean a specifically Ethiopian road to socialism. Articles to that effect did in fact appear in the papers.

To lay the theoretical foundation of socialism remains a task of the future. There is a burning desire in the leaders and in the intellectual masses to learn everything connected with the ideological foundations and with the experience to date of constructing socialism.

As far as our own judgement on the Ethiopian situation is concerned, it is very important to note that the declaration proclaims - although not in these terms - the taking into state possession and under state control of the means of production. This is none other than the policy of restricting and expropriating capitalism. The struggle against exploitation has been well and truly joined.

The government has in fact started to take into state hands certain sectors of the national economy, and to realize state majority holdings in other. On January 1, 1975 the banks and insurance companies were nationalized.⁵⁶ This measure encompassed the three major Ethiopian banks, some other financial institutions and 14 insurance companies. Nationalization affected foreign property, too. The declaration covered measures of compensation of the proprietors both in the country and abroad.

As far as the development of the Ethiopian economy is concerned, the nationalization of the banks was a step of decisive importance, because that part of the national economy concerned with the commerce of goods could be controlled through credits supply and bank turnover. Part of the Ethiopian national economy is a non-market economy; most of agriculture is of the subsistence type, hardly producing anything for the market.

The activities of the nationalized institutions are being carried on without major hitches. Their turnover is normal. The newly designated heads have taken up their posts, although with some delay. The institutions have been organically incorporated into the activities of the national economy.

Within the scope of another important measure of nationalization, 72 industrial and commercial enterprises were taken into state possession, and in a further 29 enterprises the state acquired majority holdings. The industry has thus been nationalized to 70 per cent of its volume. An important state sector has thus been created in Ethiopia. There is a separate ministry dealing with the affairs of the nationalized companies, which makes serious efforts to strengthen the newly taken over installations.⁵⁷

On a platform of socialism, Ethiopia embarked on a policy of restricting and expropriating capitalism, on an economic policy progressing toward socialism.

Liquidating feudal conditions in agriculture - the agrarian reform

For millennia rather than just centuries, the living conditions of people were determined by their relation to land. The country was under the rule of feudal landlords, and the masses lived in bondage up to the nineteen-seventies.

The reform that brought social justice is one of the principal weapons in the fight against oppression, injustice, poverty and misery. The Ethiopian people is now in a position to start on its way towards freedom and progress and a human life.

The liquidation of the feudal conditions of ownership means the termination of exploitation of the millions of Ethiopian peasantry, and the opening of a new road for the rise of the rural, peasant population and to its veritable cooperation in developing its own country.

The reform is a means of augmenting production, of increasing rural income, of bringing the broad peasant masses into the bloodstream of the national economy. It is a step towards eliminating rural unemployment, and at the same time an opportunity in the evolution of other important sectors of the national economy.

The agrarian reform is a historic act in the life of the Ethiopian people. This is how it is considered and assessed by the rural population as well as by the broad masses of town-dwelling working people.

This is the sort of reaction it called forth in the foreign countries of Africa,⁵⁸ Europe and the developing world.

The principal features and provisions of the reforms are as follows.⁵⁹

- The nature of land ownership was transformed. All rural land was declared to be "the collective possession of the Ethiopian people". No person or organization could have a title to the private tenure of land. No compensation is due for land. (A rightful compensation for the chattels, equipment and constructions on the land is to be paid.)

- Land is to be distributed among the citizens engaged in agriculture, tilling the land in person. (The former landlord can also receive a plot.) No family can hold a plot larger than 10 hectares. (The quality of the plot is to be taken into account.) The use of hired labour is not permitted.

- Land must not be sold, exchanged, bequeathed, mortgaged or leased. In the event of the titulary's death, his immediate relations may continue to use the land provided they till it with their own labour.

- The relation of landlord to tenant was terminated with the entering into force of the law, and all obligations deriving from such relation were abrogated. The continuity of work on the land is ensured by temporary provisions.

- The large commercially-oriented farms and estates are taken over by the state for the purpose of creating cooperatives or state farms. (The state is to pay compensation for the chattels, equipment and constructions pertaining to such land.)

- The law decrees the organization of peasants' associations responsible for the distribution of land, for organizing the working of the land and the connected activities (marketing, credits), for the protection of waters and forests that are common property and for a number of other activities in rural areas. Any former tenant, landless person or holder of less than 10 hectares may become a member of the peasants' associations. Each association may cover 800 hectares as based on the ancient land area unit called chika shum.⁶⁰

The law includes a number of further provisions concerning some important special problems raised by the diversity of land ownership conditions. These such as affairs concerning community (village-community) lands and the peasants' associations or cooperatives to be organized on these, the land belonging to the nomadic population, issues of grazing and other problems. (53 per cent of the total area of the country is grassland, a significant part of which used to be grazed by nomadic shepherds.)

The agrarian reform is the beginning of a new phase, of new social and productive relationships. It is not merely an anti-feudal measure, nor a simple bourgeoisie-type reform, but a means of developing a new society. The law has taken considerable pains to observe the historical traditions of Ethiopia as a whole and of the rural population in particular.

What are the problems and preoccupations raised and the advantages afforded by the law now, a few months after its promulgation?

The nature of land tenure. The land belongs to the Ethiopian people, and so ownership is in a certain sense "communitarian". Throughout Ethiopian history the land was held by landlords, the Church and some of the peasants under a variety of titles. There were in addition rural community lands in some provinces.⁶¹ Without affecting feudal conditions in the least, the measures of "modernization" taken in the 20th century, after World War II in particular, deliberately tangled up all land tenure relationships. Courts were largely occupied with lawsuits concerning land ownership.

Under such conditions, no proprietary sense and experience could develop. The strivings of the peasantry were aimed at the independent pos-

session and use of the land. This is expressed by the distribution of land and by the form of association chosen for its working. It is this highly complex system of land tenure and use together with the requirement of achieving socialism that justified the definition and systematization of land ownership as laid down by the law.

Justification of the 10-hectare upper limit. The government started from the assumption that, at the present level of development and using the current agrotechnology, a family cooperating with other families can work a plot of this size. Plans for the future include the further development of the forms of cooperation. The concept that land tenure be restricted to those who in effect work the land eliminates hired labour from agriculture.

This provision, however, affects many town-dwelling men-in-the-street, too. In ancient, rudimentary Ethiopian society most of the town-dwelling population maintained links to their rural relatives. Most of the workers or intellectuals are first- or second-generation, retaining connections with the land, with the rural family. Part of the land tilled by the family belonged to them and provided them with income and food supplies.

The national bourgeoisie, part of the intelligentsia and even members of the armed forces and other social strata likewise possessed lands. These lands have been or will be distributed. This is what resulted in certain tensions and difficulties whose political consequences were by no means indifferent. Bourgeois propaganda arose in loud criticism of the law, "taking the side" of the aforementioned social strata. Its aims were quite clear - to subvert and undermine the developing unity of the people.

The problem of peasants' associations. Making use of historical traditions, the government is shaping the elements of a new society in agriculture. For the time being these are simple associations and cooperation agreements which can, however, be developed later on into producers' cooperatives. The associations were entrusted with administrative tasks, too, but the realization of these is of course currently at a rudimentary level. The organization of the associations has been begun. Two months after the promulgation of the law several thousands of associations are operating⁶² and working their lands. The peasants liberated from feudal bondage till their lands independently and enjoy themselves the fruits of their toils.

In Ethiopia, the land now belongs to those who work it.

International position and foreign policy connections of Ethiopia

From the mid-nineteenth century on, and even before, Ethiopia fell into the sphere of influence of the international policies and conquering attitudes of the European powers. It was first France and England and later on Italy that were desirous to extend their influence, to occupy parts of the country, and by occupying adjoining countries and provinces to inveigle Ethiopian politics into pursuits favourable to themselves.

Emperor Menelik II (1889-1913), the unifier of the country, strove to pursue a policy vis-a-vis the colonizing powers that, profiting by the antagonisms among those, and enrolling their assistance for his development projects, let him carry on his unifying policies. In 1889, he concluded the Ucciali treaty⁶³ which left Eritrea to the Italians but ensured Italian assistance in the international recognition and the development of the country. The Italian-Ethiopian antagonism, the struggle against Italian encroachment

was one of the central issues of Ethiopian foreign policy. Although the Italians were defeated by Menelik II's troops at Adowa in 1896, the series of Italian actions was resumed after World War I: the Italian Fascist state led by Mussolini, with Eritrea for its base, was a permanent menace to Ethiopia.

French and English imperialisms preferred to make its policies prevail by the means of cooperation and participation in development. France - more precisely, French capital - built a railway out of Djibouti; the English and French helped to shape the "modern" state. Emperors Menelik II and Haile Selassie strove to win recognition for their country through friendship with the capitalist powers.

In October 1935, however, Italian Fascist state embarked on a war of conquest against Ethiopia. Ethiopia was thus doomed to become the first prey of Fascist aggression. England and France gave no help to the valiantly fighting Ethiopians. Emperor Haile Selassie fled the country; the troops pursuing a guerrilla war without the proper equipment were left to themselves; some of the feudal lords fled together with the Emperor.⁶⁴

The League of Nations, addressed by the Emperor who asked the nations for help and for a condemnation of Fascism, did nothing for the Ethiopian people fallen a prey to aggression.

In five years of bloody struggle for its liberation, the Ethiopian people together with other anti-fascist forces defeated Fascism in Ethiopia. The Emperor returned to the country as the alleged leader of the struggle, to continue the policy of feudal oppression, to lead his country and its foreign policy along the road of strengthening ties with the capitalist powers and of developing the Western orientation of Ethiopia.

After World War II, Ethiopia was bound by close ties to the capitalist world. The US in 1953 signed a military treaty for a term of 25 years with Ethiopia; it strengthened and provided with supplies the Ethiopian army which, 40000 strong, became one of the strongest armies of Africa. On Eritrean territory, the US subsequently constructed a communications satellite tracking station which was in fact a camouflaged military base. England, the German Federal Republic and other capitalist countries developed a close cooperation with Imperial Ethiopia, extended economic and development aid, and trained cadres in an effort to make their mutual ties strong and well-founded.

At the same time, while pursuing this Western orientation, the Emperor assumed a significant role in the movement of non-aligned nations and in the struggle for the unification of Africa. It was with his mediation that the Organization of African Unity was organized, in whose work he took an important part. The headquarters of the organization was sited in Addis Ababa.⁶⁵

The Emperor made efforts to develop favourable relations with the socialist countries. He paid several visits to the Soviet Union and stayed in other socialist countries. He established diplomatic ties with China and led an official delegation to Peking.

In Ethiopia, this policy was assessed as a "balancing act" to suggest that the orientation pursued by the Emperor was basically a Western, capitalist one, while he wanted to project the image of a "modern", "kind" Emperor before the developing world and his own people.

The new military government wants to shape Ethiopian foreign policy with three factors in mind:

(1) Ethiopia has embarked on the road of building socialism.

(2) Ethiopia is a member of the non-aligned group, and a founder member and active participant of the Organization of African Unity. Ethiopia is a developing country.

(3) The situation of Ethiopia in its relationship to the neighbouring countries; the building of friendly relations with those; reinforcing the unity and integrity of the country.

Ethiopian foreign policy is determined by the fact that the country is proceeding along the road of progressive social change. In the current historical period, the forces of the country are tied down by internal, social movements. The task of foreign policy is to ensure favourable conditions for these endeavours. The above-cited December 1974 declaration of the government talks about "strengthening world peace, progress and cooperation". Ethiopia is desirous of maintaining active links with all peace-loving countries.

The Ethiopian foreign policy managers formulated their task by stating that the external connexions of Ethiopia must be diversified. The one-sided Western orientation must be changed. They want to establish ties with a broad range of countries and expand relations with the socialist countries. They want to profit by the experience of the socialist countries and to cooperate with them in the struggle for peace and social progress.⁶⁶

The main aim of Ethiopia is to create fraternal, friendly relations with the neighbouring countries, as emphasized in the first statements and in the program of the Military Council. There are many issues awaiting a solution that will have to be raised.

The relations with the Sudan are favourable. Sudan was among the first to recognize, and to establish official ties with, the new government. Beyond its political importance, this connexion is useful for the Ethiopian government in its bearing on the solution of the Eritrean problem. Some of the Eritrean émigrés live in the Sudan, which is a delicate issue of long standing in the relationship of the two countries. In the past year, repeated high-level talks took place: these covered political relations in general, and the relationship towards the Arab countries in particular.

Kenya, the southern neighbour of Ethiopia, maintained good-neighbourly relations with the country in the period of Imperial rule. The Ethiopian-Kenyan joint commission used to sit systematically to discuss a broad range of common problems. The 29th session of the Kenyan-Ethiopian Ministerial Consultative Commission⁶⁷ already took place with the participation of representatives of the new government. An agreement was reached concerning the continuation of bilateral cooperation in a number of fields (water resources, animal health, agriculture, commerce and culture).

The Kenyan-Ethiopian relationship was fraught with tensions over a fairly long period, and these have not entirely abated even now. They are partly due to the social changes. The dethronement of the Emperor was received unfavourably in Kenya, and the actions of the political and social movement were viewed with distrust. The Kenyan bourgeoisie was wary of the internal and external activities of an Ethiopia that has chosen the socialist road.

The friendly attitudes and the readiness to cooperate, evinced by the Ethiopian government, have changed things for the better.

The Somalian-Ethiopian relationship had been characterized by serious tensions ever since the declaration of Somalian independence.

Some of these tensions were due to the frontiers created by the African colonial regimes and by the nomadic tribes wandering across those frontiers. The problem is still unsolved. Tensions have repeatedly flared up over the last few decades, and the issues were taken to various international tribunals.⁶⁸ It has not so far been possible to solve the problem. The new military government sent a goodwill delegation to Somalia which found a favourable reception. The relations between the two prog-

ressive countries improved. The peaceful solution of their differences is the interest and is the desire of the progressive countries of the region and of Africa as a whole.

Ethiopia, a member of the group of non-aligned countries, played a significant role in the life of that group. This connexion was extended and filled with anti-imperialist content by the new government. Certain difficulties arose vis-a-vis some of the African countries after the dethronement. Some of the African heads of state, anxious about the fate of the Emperor and taking a stand on his side, took up dilatory positions in their assessment of the new government. Relations to most of the African countries have improved since; the African press writes in an appreciative vein on the achievements of the government. Goodwill delegations have been welcomed and accorded positive receptions.

The international situation of Ethiopia is markedly influenced by the Eritrean issue. Eritrea, an organic part of Ethiopian territory, is the north-eastern province of the country, having an area of 117,000 sq. km and a population of some 2 million people. In the course of history it repeatedly fell prey to invading conquerors and colonizers. Its ports represent important international outlets for the country. In the last third of the nineteenth century Eritrea was occupied by Italian colonizers. In the period between the two world wars, it was from their bases in Eritrea that Fascist troops conquered most of Ethiopia. After World War II the region became a British mandate, and then, in 1952, it was joined to Ethiopia with the status of a federal territory. The Imperial feudal government gradually liquidated the constitutional status of Eritrea and incorporated it into the Empire.⁶⁹

The feudal administration did everything in its might to liquidate the democratic forms that afforded a certain liberty and freedom of movement to the Eritrean population. This endeavour resulted in serious nationalistic and religious antagonisms. The representatives of the social strata insisting on their democratic rights fled the country. Later on, a resistance movement against oppressive Amharic chauvinism and the feudal bureaucratic military system was started in Eritrea proper. The Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) was called into life.

The Front united separatist elements organized on a religious basis, but also groups having progressive ideas taking up the struggle against feudalism. The emerging armed conflict was supported by some of the Arab countries. The Emperor made attempts at repressing the movement, but without avail.

The new government inherited a burdensome problem in Eritrea. The province is a focus of serious antagonisms. The military government denounced the crimes of the imperial administration but was not ready to condone separatist strivings. The fight flared up again. Control of the Front was taken over by separatist elements. The demand for an independent Eritrea, supported by certain Arab countries, menaced the integrity of Ethiopia. The Eritrean problem is an internal affair that may, however, turn into a dangerous international conflict. Diplomatic talks with the Arab countries have met with no success. The majority of African countries, on the other hand, shares the standpoint of the military government: Eritrea is an integral part of Ethiopia.

The problem has grown into a grave internal conflict which ties down a considerable part of the military and economic powers of the country. The international relevance of the problem aggravates the foreign policy position of Ethiopia. The imperialist countries strive to stir up trouble on the pretext of these internal difficulties. The only possible solution of

the problem is by negotiations, but the necessary preconditions to those have not yet been fully realized, although present indications make it likely that they may be in the near future.

Perspectives of relations to the socialist countries

Most socialist countries established links with the Ethiopian government right after World War II. The Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia assisted Ethiopia in its struggle against Fascism.

In the nineteen-fifties, diplomatic links with Ethiopia were established by one socialist country after another, Hungary established such ties at the embassy level in 1959 and delegated an ambassador in 1965.

The Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Poland extended credits to Ethiopia. The only oil refinery of the country, of half-a-million tons capacity, the technical teachers' training college and some other institutions of importance for the country were financed out of a \$ 100m Soviet loan. A leather and shoe factory and a rubber factory were built with Czechoslovak assistance, and an important industrial investment in the country, a leather processing combine, is also being built with Czechoslovak aid. A number of other industrial and other establishments are built in Yugoslav, Polish and other cooperation.

In the capital of Ethiopia, a hospital of the Soviet Red Cross⁷⁰ is in operation. There is perhaps no hospital in the country where there is no doctor from one of the socialist countries, including Hungary.

The ties established with developing Ethiopia on the basis of respect for the sovereignty of the country, solidarity with and assistance to the Ethiopian people can now be further developed since 1974-1975 on the basis of peace and social progress and of our common aims.

In the endeavour to take social progress further and to defend its achievements, Ethiopia has an imperative need for the broadening of its base of international solidarity.

In the comparative isolation of the first year of its existence, the new government received friendly political support from the socialist countries. The delegation that visited the socialist countries in March 1975 expressed its appreciation for this help.

Over and above their bilateral political ties, Ethiopia and the socialist countries may and do cooperate on the international arena in defending peace and promoting international detente. The Ethiopian government is backing the nuclear test ban, the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, the convening of a world conference of disarmament, and many other peace initiatives proposed by the Soviet Union and the socialist countries. Together with the most progressive representatives of the non-aligned countries, it may take a stand against the neo-colonialist efforts of the imperialist countries. Ethiopia and the socialist countries belong to a common front in the struggle for the economic independence of the developing countries and for the realization of a new international economic order.

The socialist countries including Hungary may develop wide-ranging economic ties and cooperation ventures with Ethiopia.

Ethiopia is currently engaged in developing its economic potential, its natural resources. Its mineral resources, oil etc. have not even been prospected properly.

Ethiopian agriculture has inexhaustible potentials. The country is extremely rich in livestock. Over its vast territory, products both of the tropical and of the temperate zones can be grown. By establishing agro-industrial combines, it would be possible to ensure the supply of our country with animal-feed proteins. We could also procure coffee, cotton and other products on the Ethiopian market. The quality of raw leather goods is good. Ethiopia may be an important market for our industry. Talks concerning the supply of vehicles have already been started. Ethiopia could stock up its park of buses by buying from Hungary. Ethiopian development may be an important outlet for certain sectors of our machine-building industry. The Ethiopian textile industry is an excellent opportunity for the textile-mill machinery manufactured in Hungary. Cooperation with the emerging Ethiopian pharmaceutical industry is a challenge and an opportunity to our own well-developed pharmaceutical sector. The outlining and development of fields of mutually favourable cooperation is a joint Ethiopian-Hungarian task. Developing Ethiopia may become an important partner of cooperation for Hungary.

These statements hold for the other socialist countries, too. Ethiopia needs Soviet tractors and oil refinery equipment, and the products of the national economies of the other socialist countries, too.

The capitalist countries which maintained close economic and political ties with Imperial Ethiopia are looking for pretexts now to explain why they are not in a position to develop those ties any further. One of these pretexts is the question of compensation for nationalized companies. These countries want to exert pressure on Ethiopia. Private capital does not consider that adequate profitability is ensured and refrains from establishing connections.

For Ethiopia, political and economical ties with the socialist countries are not the only important ones. One of the fundamental problems of the country is the training of new cadres, the development of middle and high level education, and the support of public education in general. Culture, science and the education of the masses is one of the basic requirements of socialism. Ethiopia requests the assistance, and wants to profit by the experience, of the socialist countries in the formation of new cadres.

Laying the foundations of a new society in a country is not a problem of material resources alone, but also one of sharing experience, and of the creative application of past achievements. For Ethiopia, every day brings new problems and the demand of creating something new. The country liberated from the yoke of feudalism is looking impatiently for the best solutions fitting to its traditions and for the experience that can be made the best use of in the construction of socialism. It expects our assistance on the principles of international solidarity, and of respect for its independence.

A review of the nature of changes in Ethiopia

The military revolt mobilized the oppressed Ethiopian masses in a struggle against the feudal order and feudal exploitation. Joining ranks with the workers, the most conscious groups of the peasantry, the students and the progressive intelligentsia, it achieved the overthrow of feudal rule. It removed from power and annihilated the feudal oppressive structure and

its representatives. It fought a successful fight in its own ranks for the declaration of progressive social programs, and initiated policies of overthrowing feudalism, restricting and expropriating capitalism, creating a new society, proclaiming and realizing socialism.

The creation of an agrarian reform is not merely an anti-feudal measure, not just a bourgeois-democratic achievement, but a step towards the new society. The forms of association in agriculture are germs of novel forms of ownership.

The taking into state hands of the banks, financial institutions, insurance companies and the most important industries is an advance on the road to eliminating exploitation and an important means of restricting capitalism.

Backwardness, poverty, illness, ignorance and the low level of literacy are heavy burdens and a serious obstacle in the way of transforming society.

The military government provides the country with a strong source of power in the struggle for the realization of democratic and socialist aims. The workers' class, however, is still weak, with a rudimentary organization; the peasantry is backward and most of it has no political consciousness; the intelligentsia is divided and part of it sides with the ancient ruling classes; its political education is lacunary. Political activity in the country used to be forbidden and the buildup of a political conscience has just started. The formation of a political mass party has only now been taken up by the Military Council.

The ideological basis of the transformation is socialism. Ideological questions will have to be clarified in what follows. The slogan and program of Ethiopian socialism was born of nationalist ideas, of the concept of socialism and of the wish to hew to Ethiopian traditions. It has become clear by now that the country wishes to proceed on the basis of international workers' solidarity and the international experience of socialism, and that in the course of progress the ideas and principles of Marxism, of scientific socialism will gain an ever broader acceptance.

The international climate for the transformation of the country is more favourable than it has been before, for the social struggles started elsewhere in the developing world. The forces of socialism have become mightier, the policies of freedom and detente have created favourable conditions for countries choosing independent social progress. Overt intervention by imperialist circles has become more problematic, the pressures, internal subversion and divisive tactics employed by the capitalist countries had not had any success in breaching the defences and the unity of military power. It is to be hoped that solidarity among developing countries will further evolve, among others in view of the Chilean experience. In the shape of the Eritrean problem the country has a rather oppressive preoccupation, but despite all these difficulties the international position of Ethiopia is improving.

Passing in review all the interconnexions of the above-enumerated factors, Ethiopia may be said to have embarked upon the road of non-capitalist evolution, liquidating feudal conditions as it goes along. The movement today is still in the democratic stage of the evolution of socialism, in which socialist elements are continually gaining strength, and the proclaimed socialist program is creating the preconditions of socialism by a transformation of society, the nationalization of the means of production and by the development, embracing the entire society, of the country's resources.

N O T E S

1. E. A. Budge: *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menelik I*. London, 1932. - *Ker ba Negast* (The Glory of Kings), an Ethiopian historical compilation from the thirteenth century.
2. The monophysite creed held Jesus to have a purely divine rather than a dual nature. The creed, declared a heresy by the council of Chalcedon, dispersed in the Near and Middle East and in Africa including Ethiopia.
3. E. Ullendorf: *The Ethiopians. An Introduction to Country and People*. /Third edition/ London, 1973. 68-70. p.
4. E. Ullendorf: op. cit., 71. p.
5. J. Markakis: *Ethiopia, Anatomy of Traditional Polity*. Oxford, 1974.
6. Menelik means Founder of State. The legend alleges Menelik I to have the son of the Queen of Sheba and of King Solomon, founder of the Axum Empire.
7. Rist land means inheritable land, obtained by the present owners on the strength of possession of that land by their ancestors. This is what rist means in respect of the peasantry. Rist land could not be sold.
8. J. Markakis: op. cit., 84-85. p.
9. Ibid., 132-140. p.
10. Report on a Survey for 1969. Central Statistical Office, Addis Ababa. Cf. J. Markakis: op. cit. 128. p.
11. Ethiopian Herald, January 31, 1975.
12. R. Pankhurst: *State and Land in Ethiopian History*. Addis Ababa, 1966.
13. J. Markakis: op. cit., 83-85. p.
14. R. Pankhurst: *Land Grants, Nobles in the 17th, 18th centuries*. Ethiopian Herald, April 10, 1974.
15. Menelik II and Haile Selassie have come from the richest landlord families of this district.
16. Amharas are descendants of the ancient aboriginal Arabic population; in the course of history they played a central role in constituting and

ruling the empire. Their language in its current form developed from the ancient Ge'ez tongue (cf. E. Ullendorf: op. cit.).

17. The Fetha Negast is a translation and adaptation to Ethiopian conditions of the law code of the Egyptian Coptic Church, dealing with canon law, property rights and other important problems of contemporary society. Published in the 15th century in Ethiopia, it played an important role in the exercise of law by the feudal power.
18. The religious rights of the Muslim population, a significant percentage of the entire population of the country, were curtailed; they were not permitted to build temples. Muslims seldom held state functions.
19. The exchange rate of the Ethiopian dollar in 1970, when this decree entered into force, was 2.50 ₪ S to the US dollar.
20. R. Pankhurst: Menelik and the Utilization of Foreign Skills in Ethiopia, *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Addis Ababa)
21. Consolidated Laws of Ethiopia. Vol. I, Secs. 1 to 19, 60. p.
22. From the nineteen-sixties on, some 2000 Ethiopian students were sent to study at foreign universities every year.
23. M. Okuneva: Bourgeois sociology and evolution of working classes in developing countries. *Mirovaja Ekonomika i Mezhdunarodnye Otnoshenija*, 1974, No. 2. /in Russian/
24. V. I. Lenin: A kapitalizmus fejlődése Oroszországban. /The evolution of capitalism in Russia/ Budapest, 1951. Szikra.
25. J. Markakis: op. cit. 174. p.
26. Consolidated Laws of Ethiopia, No. 210, 1963.
27. A Hungarian Trade Union delegation visited Ethiopia in 1972.
28. Estimates of the Central Statistical Office of Ethiopia.
29. There were 100 to 150 commercially oriented farms or large estates in the country, with acreages ranging from 400 to 7000.
30. 28 per cent of the country is grassland suitable for grazing (FAO estimate of 1961).
31. Assefa Bequele and Eshetu Chole: A Profile of the Ethiopian Economy. London, 1969. Oxford University Press, 34. p.
32. These years were in addition afflicted by heavy drought. In the northern part of the country, 100000 people died of hunger.
33. First five-year plan, 1958/59 to 1962/63; second, 1963/64 to 1967/68; third, 1968/69 to 1972/73, prolonged up to 1974.
34. Statistical Abstract 1972, Central Statistical Office of Ethiopia, 51. p.
35. ECA. Survey of Economic and Social Conditions in Africa, 1974. Part II, 63. p.
36. 1973 data. Cf. ECA, op. cit.
37. National Bank of Ethiopia. Quarterly Bulletin, December 1974, 83-84. p.
38. At that time, the export price index was 162.4 and the import price index 124.2 (1968 = 100). Cf. National Bank of Ethiopia, Quarterly Bulletin, December 1974, 91. p.

39. National Bank of Ethiopia, Quarterly Bulletin, September 1974, 3-4. p.
40. The handbills were strewn from army helicopters over Addis Ababa on March 4, 1974.
41. Decision of March 1, 1974 of the CELU.
42. The Military Council formed in the army did not cooperate above division level. Division councils communicated with each other by messages.
43. The decision of the Imperial house was published in the March 26, 1974 issue of the English-language paper Ethiopian Herald; Haile Selassie issued a decree concerning the constitution of a Commission of Inquiry into whether current or former government officials had enriched themselves illegally, or whether they had squandered public money or resources.
44. The address of the Emperor to the people was published in the March 6 issue of the Ethiopian Herald.
45. A statement in the radio and television, Ethiopian Herald, June 18, 1974.
46. On his 82nd birthday, still observed throughout the country, the Emperor nominated a new Prime Minister on the proposal of the Military Coordinating Committee.
47. The press was informed of the contents of the slogan by the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, the Police and the Territorial Army (Ethiopian Herald, September 6, 1974).
48. Ethiopian Herald, September 13, 1974. - Negarit Gazeta (the Ethiopian official gazette), Vol. 34, No. 1, September 12, 1974.
49. Ethiopian Herald, March 22, 1975.
50. Ethiopian Herald, September 13, 1974.
51. Ethiopian Herald, November 1, 1974.
51. The country-wide conference of the Confederation of Ethiopian Labour Unions (CELU) began on September 17, 1974. Its resolutions were not published in the press.
53. The campaign of instruction and work by the youth was initiated on December 21, 1974 by the Military Committee; it served as the occasion for a country-wide celebration.
54. Announcement concerning the removal of General Aman. Ethiopian Herald, November 24, 1974. Later on, a number of further communications concerning this point appeared in the press.
55. The Declaration of the Provisional Military Government of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, December 20, 1974, is described and cited here on the basis of a publication of the Ministry of Information.
56. The declaration of the Provisional Military Government concerning the nationalization was published in the January 2 issue of the Ethiopian Herald, under the headline "Following the line of Ethiopian Socialism".
57. In the first two months of nationalization, these enterprises augmented their production by 20 per cent. (A report by the Ministry of Development of National Resources. Ethiopian Herald, April 17, 1975).

58. The significance of agrarian reform in Ethiopia was discussed in several papers in the April, 1975 issue of the periodical "Africa".
59. The description and citations are from the original text of the law as promulgated on March 4, 1975, and published in that day's Ethiopian Herald.
60. The chika shum is an ancient administrative unit, or its head, respectively. Etymologically the words mean chika - dirt, shum - head. It used to be the traditional forum of peasant society or community affairs. The head elected by the elders and the heads of families organized cooperative work, defended common property and was responsible for the security of the district. (Cf. J. Markakis: op. cit. 312-316.p.)
61. In the three northern provinces, most of the land belonged to such communities. "Redistribution" according to the provisions of the law was started with due respect for the rules governing those land communities.
62. The press reports daily on the formation of more and more such associations, on common utilization of the means of production, equipment and livestock. These first steps do not, of course, proceed without debates and discussions.
63. The Italians, however, interpreted the treaty as stipulating that Ethiopia was to be represented by Italy vis-a-vis any other third country. This led to a further heightening of tensions.
64. A reassessment of the Emperor's role is currently going on. Ethiopian historians in recent publications of the government very decidedly criticize the decision of the Emperor to leave the country in May 1936 and to take up a self-imposed exile. Cf. "From Fascism to Feudalism", Ministry of Information, Addis Ababa, April 1975.
65. The Charter of the Organization of African Unity was signed in Addis Ababa on May 25, 1963.
66. Cf. the joint communiqués on the talks of the Ethiopian delegation visiting socialist countries. Ethiopian Herald, March 28, 1975.
67. The session took place on April 4-5, 1975. For a detailed assessment cf. Ethiopian Herald, April 8.
68. At the 1963 and 1973 conferences of the Heads of State of the Organization of African Unity the representatives of both states exposed the standpoints of their respective governments.
69. Consolidated Laws of Ethiopia. Vol. I, 34. p. Addis Ababa, 1972.
70. The Federation of the Soviet Red Cross and Red Half Moon societies established a 120-bed hospital in Addis Ababa in 1947.

POSTSCRIPT

This study on Ethiopian development was completed in mid-1975 which means that it covers events and the revolutionary transformation up to this date.

The year and a half since then has confirmed the main conclusion of the study: an anti-feudal, anti-imperialist democratic transformation is taking place in Ethiopia, gradually establishing a policy oriented towards socialism, restricting capitalist exploitation, creating an important state capitalist sector and establishing a progressive state power and infrastructure.

This process is accompanied by serious social and political contradictions, strong attacks by internal and external reaction and the struggle for social change. The struggle is characterized by close interconnection between the peaceful enlightenment and political struggle on the one hand and, on the other, the overthrow of armed counter-attacks, the armed defence of the results achieved and the defence of the policy within the ruling organs of the Dergue, the power basis.

The struggle is being waged in two main areas: one is to carry through and defend the most important measures for revolutionary changes and the land reform and the other is related to the nature of the power and its relations with the masses. The two are closely inter-twined. The land reform assists the liberation of the peasant masses, the social transformation of the village and the creation of a mass basis in the villages for the military government which is struggling for social changes. Redistribution of the land and liberation from the feudal burdens is the first step in the advancement of the peasantry and marks the beginning of the social transformation of Ethiopia.

The nature and aspirations of the power are illustrated by the following quotation from the programme of the national democratic revolution issued in April 1976:

"... the contradictions will be resolved effectively and correctly through the national democratic revolution. The aim of the national democratic revolution is to liberate the Ethiopian people from the shackles of feudal and imperialist oppression and to smoothe the way for scientific socialism."^x

Thus the nature of the socialist orientation, which has its ideological basis in scientific socialism, is growing stronger in the aspirations of the social and political power. The most revolutionary elements in the Dergue are struggling to promote this policy.

^{x/} Programme of the Ethiopian National Democratic Revolution. Ethiopian Herald, 21st April, 1976.

What are the main areas of confrontation in this struggle?

In the question of land reform, the nature of the reform itself is debated. The reform of 1975 ended all forms of private land ownership and declared that the land is the property of the Ethiopian people who cultivate it. The debate and contradiction is between the concept of the right to possess and use land and land ownership. Behind this lie the contradiction and struggle between the bourgeois capitalist path for the transformation of agriculture and the introduction of collective farming, an issue which is openly discussed in the international and the semi-legal Ethiopian press. Many of the former owners, the intelligentsia, certain student groups and the illegal Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Army since formed supported this bourgeois form of land reform and attack the law from these grounds. The reaction and certain groups of misguided intellectuals and students are taking advantage of the difficulties in carrying through the reform, imprecisions in the law itself and of the backward sectors of the peasantry to stir up feelings against the land reform and create supply problems. The military government is responding by organizing and arming the peasant millions to defend and consolidate the land reform and the people's power.

The call for civilian government has been raised in opposition to the revolutionary military leadership. Efforts have been made to isolate the consistently progressive wing of the Dergue and the forces demanding a firm stand against the reaction. Under the direction of the EPRP attempts have been made to create an atmosphere of political uncertainty by demanding democracy, human rights and political liberties and by struggling for the right to strike. The EPRP agitation, based on petit bourgeois, ultra-radical demagoguery and its demand for a multi-party system - which would divide rather than combine forces in the present stage of Ethiopian social development - have heightened the atmosphere of political uncertainty. The Dergue was divided over the issue of the programme for resolution of the political questions and those in favour of joining forces with the EPRP wanted to oust the followers of the progressive, socialist orientation. The political polarization led to a serious crisis in early 1977 in which the action programme of the political forces consistently struggling for social progress and the principles and practice of social transformation based on the popular masses were once again strengthened and defended.

The circumstances outlined above make the emergence of the mass political movement extremely difficult. The reaction resorts to the armed attacks, assassinations and intimidation in its fight against the forces supporting the Dergue's policy. The struggle between reaction and progress is being waged under extreme conditions. The questions of the economy, culture, public health and ideology are receiving less attention than they deserve under the strained national and, to a certain extent, international conditions.

The Ethiopian feudal and bourgeois elements organizing abroad, as well as their followers inside the country, are endangering the unity and integrity of the power and the country. The movement is supported by all the reactionary Arab countries and many political actions of the imperialist countries. In addition to this, there is the very complex problem of Eritrea involving many emotional and political elements.

In this situation and under these national and international conditions, the solidarity of the progressive forces is an important condition for Ethiopia's advancement.

Budapest, February 1977.

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